

Gnostica

Writings by Phillip Medhurst

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A. POEMS

THE LEAF

Between the growing twig and withering leaf,
Spinning in the winds of faith and doubt,
Which winnow inexorably from Fall
To Spring, I waver, hover, float
Like thistledown in squall or
Calm. What matter I? since I,
Unlike that other down,
Bear no sure freight
Of hope, howbeit
Frail.

Did Adam really drop from the hand of God,
Then climb the tree of death, then rise,
To flower again? Or, perhaps, recline,
Then rise, so casually dignified
In fancy only, sistine folly,
Undragged by gravity,
From Michaelangelo?

The falling leaf
Makes a bed
Where the
Seed can
Die
Until
It wakes.
I am a leaf –
This leaf. The seed,
Some other thing, sinks down,
Deep down into the mould to rise.
I am, alas, a leaf, a leaf alone:
A leaf that surely, all alone,
Lies down and dies.

EDEN

Since Adam delved and Eva span
Man's waywardness has spoiled God's plan.
Disease and death here level all;
Our nakedness reveals a Fall.
Though Christ could make a corpse to eat,
To feed this child would be a feat.
Though God could make a bush to speak,
A dumb child tells us who is weak:
For it can neither dig nor spin,
And day by day its limbs grow thin.
Such is the consequence of sin.

SACRIFICE

A sacrifice like Abel's is required:
No shrieking root torn up,
Or apple plucked and dashed,
But some born thing, with sentience,
Whose face, bewildered by the knife
Will stare as life flows out.

That way our God is satisfied,
Reclaiming what he once bestowed,
Maybe, heartless, envying
This creature-kind who lived
And loved the crimson blood too much -
As though it were its own.

SCAPEGOAT

Each head, bowed down with several cares
Is raised to watch the sacrifice
Proceed to where Jehovah waits
To host a feast that famishes.
This flock anticipates a goat
That stumbles on the precipice.
We cannot spare our sympathy.
With it our karma vanishes.

SAMSON

Sam found a little knife
While wand'ring in the ward.
When nurses tried to truss
The old man to a chair,
He cut their knotted tape
And made good his escape.
But is he strong enough
To grab with steady hand
The starched lapel of Life-
In-Death's white coat and crash
That cranium's empty dome?
That way, he might get home.

JONAH

In the belly of Leviathan
Species of dismemberment
Float past, the beast's repast.
How the staring fishes swim
Along the gastric stream
Towards oblivion.

Shards of exoskeletons
Roll on down the sewer
That serves up sustenance.
The storm abates.
Repentance circulates
In the putrid air.

The monster swims,
Its tail flicking
The now-still waves.
The sky clears.
I patiently await
A resurrecting belch

THE WORD

Between the bone and marrow
Penetrates the arrow
Of your Word. And so
Salvific poison spreads.

Once it takes hold
All worldliness contracts
To lodge that head
Above my heart.

There is no antidote,
For - sweet Mercury -
The chemistry must kill
What kills, then save outright.

This unevaded shaft
Invades me. I must yield.
For once it has arrived,
It lives and thrives.

ANNUNCIATION

As swift as eye-of-reason's blink
Consent, in waiting, parted lips.
As quick as pulse could leap to beat
Of wing, her cry let fly to air
Where word met Word. Thunder unrolled -
Salvation's sentence in pursuit
Of spirit's lightning dart to soul
Pre-hushed. Her heart, inviolate still,
Now known, knew all. So All the valley
Filled, and pure Love's river swelled,
Then brimmed to shed its tide on time.

CONCEPTION

Mary, maid and mother - both -
Conceives divinity.
(Fire, we're told, does not consume
Her pure virginity).

You who tread on holy ground
Put on simplicity.
If He is to be born, God needs
All your complicity.

NOEL

Incandescent lamp-posts glow
Brightly through the shower of snow.
The tombstones, wet,
Reflect a flash
Of fake resuscitation.
The pale scene vaunts
Beauty unmarred,
Unstained by obscene flesh.
How perfect and pristine,
Unspoilt by bestial notions
Of God dropped in the hay,
And livestock's smoky breath
Set to thaw death.

EPIPHANY

In inky shadows sages scratched,
Got drunk on mythic wines.
Philosophies were sometimes hatched
From patterns in the signs.

Yet three, drawn on by astral light,
With minds as clear as day,
Traversed the sands to catch a sight
Of Truth in swaddled clay.

ICON

Though man-proportioned, Christos shrinks:
A God kenotic made.

LAZARUS

I curse the day on which my so-called friend,
Persuaded by my sisters, chose to come
And bellowed at me in my cosy den
Where I had slept for days all neatly wrapped
In perfumed swaddling-bands. For up till then
My aches and wants and cares were left outside
My fortress sealed against the world and time.
But now I am re-born with my old bones.
Conclusion to my life has all been robbed:
I must endure the painful swell again.
Though I am made a sign I now repent
The impulse of my blood which leapt too quick,
For peace by any should not be disturbed
When it by natural means has been conferred.
When brute creation first brought me to birth,
I felt no obligation. Flesh and all
I made of it was mine. But now each breath
Compounds my debt to an impatient god.

MATER DOLOROSA

Pains of childbirth, then of dispossession,
Leaping heart, then steady retrogression
Was all angelic flutters came to bring.
Fair salutations had a farewell sting.

And Death's dark angel did not pass my door,
But slammed the board, demanding more and
more.

My God, you owe this to me: let me see
Wherefore my child has now forsaken me.

I want to see him rise to tear the veil,
And borne by angels his kind father hail,
As his bejewelled banner he unfurls,
His blood its rubies and my tears its pearls.

ROOD

A tree is butchered into beams,
Torn flesh emblematised,
As Jesse's rod is re-conceived -
Delivered cruciform.

Adorned with jewels, hung with gold,
The ark becomes a rood.
A flotsam of humanity
Drowns in a sea of blood.

DESCENT

My heart goes down to Hell with him,
Though I must shut my eyes
To what he sees. I fear the dark,
But trail with quiet tread
Lest he looks back,
And weakening, lets me cling to him.

For he has work to do within
That senseless void, and I
Must be a hovering thing and hope
That he will see the light
Again, and say
That unmade, made again, is good.

EXODUS

O Christ, thy crown is broke in two pieces:
Give half to me, O give half to me.

O Christ thy cloak is riven in pieces:
Give some to me, O give some to me.

And I will mould a smaller crown,
And patch a cloak for me.

And I shall go down, down,
Down unto the sea.

And the sea shall part for me.

PIETA

I bear this weight with dignity,
For meaning is in symmetry -
Or so it seemed that way, before
I lost my elasticity.

I chiselled him - the crucified -
As handsome then: a slumbering lord,
And Mary still resplendent in
Her prime, and poised, and aureoled

In draperies. But now he droops
As heavy as a corpse will be,
And she, wrapped up against the cold,
Just clutches at this clod, her son.

I had to come in person and
Join in this undertaking, but
I'm growing old, now don't know
Where beauty is. And that's the truth.

EUCHARIST

*The rich reduced, the poor endowed,
The weak are raised to thrones of power.
The good Lord rules while kings are cowed;
He undermines the tyrant's tower.*

In tatters, stripped, from field or hedge,
God calls us to his banquet spread.
Supersubstantial manna falls,
Our daily nurture.

*The full are starved, the empty fed,
The fertile pine, the barren bear.
He flattens fields, gives landless bread;
Both weal and woe our God can share.*

I am his wheat. I shall be ground
By tooth of beast to make fine flour,
Unleavened bread - to do His will,
As done in heaven.

LENT

These first-fruits pledge what is to be
A growing and a ripening sea.
His promise raises us from sleep
And leads us out across the deep.

NOLI ME TANGERE

To me it seemed a comforting idea,
Too welcome, too sublime to be untrue
That love and meaning could thus rendez-vous:
Be gazed upon, and touched.

But doubts persist that I imagined Him.
When He did not appear I then assumed
A love that God in fact was loath to show
Unto The Crucified.

Yet can there be conclusion to my grief
If I can never cling to one who walks
Within the graveyard of my dreams, with voice
Unsilenced by his pain?

And does my vision promise me too much?
Does Christ Himself recoil from ill-placed trust,
Compelled to say, "Noli me tangere" -
That flesh can never stay.

BLACK HOLE

Not in control,
A big black hole
Pulls you in
Towards oblivion.

I thought I sensed
Something beyond.
Surely nonsense
For only no-one

Rules the world,
Until it's rolled
Up like a scroll
Inside that hole.

And did I see
A face look down?
Maybe I did.
It wore a frown.

TERESA

A cherub pressed me to my knees:
He held a flaming spear.
He struck again, and then again:
As much as I could bear.

I soon abandoned all desire
For this sweet pain to cease.
No other bliss compares to this

I greet this torment willingly.
I fondly hug the wound.
Love's quarry, breathless, flees no more,
For she is run to ground.

FRANCESCO

My verdict is as follows (mark it well):
Francesco Bernadone is a fool.
He thinks that he can strip our Mother Church,
And rob her of her dowry held in store.

If she is to be wed to high-born men,
We should not treat her grossly as a whore
Who gives her favours freely, from the heart,
To all who beat a path up to her door.

Cathedrals are not built with lepers' hands,
Or chantries by mere gutter-deaths endowed.
Bejewelled shrines must dazzle tear-filled eyes,
Not rustic dolls laid out on heaps of straw.

Francesco and his half-crazed crew may stalk
Unto their hearts' content this countryside,
But they shall not invade our frescoed walls,
Or stigmatise the icons we adore.

We rest secure beneath our mosaiced domes.
The chant of priest, the tinkle of the coin,
Ensures the soul's release, the sinner's balm,
While gospel-truth is safe beneath the floor.

AQUERO

Within this cave I heard "That Thing"
Disclosing how our prayers
Could kindle light, transfiguring
Those crippled by their cares.

And thus re-made, a sluggish flow
Could spring to healing spate.
Old bones Could pave the way to show
Changed flesh, immaculate.

Beyond the paling moon, the dawn,
An azure cincture round the earth,
Revealed to preternatural sight
How dew will fall to arid earth.

PASSOVER

We pass over unknown lands
Going east. We only hear,
Seeing nothing, tunnels
Echo and rattle.
The wherefore fades
Of our herding to
This trembling wagon,
Rubbing shoulders
Bolt upright.

I still hope, regardless,
For a little red house,
Or a little white house,
A chimney, smoking,
Children singing
In snow-showers, white as ash.
For then
I shall be free:
Work shall make me so –
Away from fear incontinent,
The stink of rank despair.

Divested of the vanity
Stitched inside my gabardine,
Will a cyclone be
The redeemer from all
The powers that be,
As I scramble, naked, up
The mound of sacrifice,
In breathless affirmation of
The riddle of I am,
We are, finally solved?

EPITAPH

I wish to leave some monument, before
I die, so I am able to reflect
On what I should have been; because the shore
That I must pass has no return, once wrecked
The only ship that might have brought me home –
Dismembered, rolling on the pallid foam

Could reconstruct the beauty of that boat,
Or purpose, why and where it meant to go
In carrying my soul, how it would float
Back to that far original sunrise
Whose light exposes what is truth, what lies,

And what the nature of its cargo was?
So I must build a ship for death, a barque
That bears a memory of me, because
That other ship, my body, will not hark
Back to my life, for once its subtle winds
Become dispersed, and once the cord that binds

It has been cut by fate's capricious hand,
Then those still travelling upon the sea
May never contemplate before they land
On shore unknown my last vitality,
As once I did in tombs that I then saw
Like upturned boats upon the Lycian shore.

Of what then can I build this ark of mine,
To bear within my immortality?
What oak or ash can I cut down, what pine
Or cedar hew for my security?
Whatever forest, and whatever wood,
I shall be taking what has been made good

By other planting, toil and nurture, long
Before the hand that plunders that slow growth
Had digitally sprouted from among
The cells established by a plighted troth
Of two conjoined in random circumstance
By centripetal force of nature's dance.

II

And who am I to pluck the fruit of slow
Maturity? Such sacrilege negates
All righteous memory. Where can I go
When every broken bough thus violates
The work of nature if not husbandry,
And tooth of saw destroys a legacy?

The matter that I work on must needs be
Some thing I almost made from no thing -
An interstice which every one can see
And filled by what I was - a vacant ring
Become a diadem, a hollow bell
That tolls a fame no mortal voice could tell.

Perhaps the treasure I will use to deck
My ship was won by force of arms, and set
A record straight, a torque torn from the neck
Of a foul enemy who won a bet,
And came by it without a just dessert -
A harvest sprung from bitterness and hurt,

Now righteous cause of this my great effect.
Or maybe I could cause to rise from dross
Some thing magnificent, some thing correct
From what was wrong, to turn what was a loss
Into a gain, and thereby leave my mark,
And turn a waste, perhaps, into a park -

But then be charged with exploitation of
Goods purchased at a knock-down price, a way
To white the sepulchre I raised above
A mess of bones that will not rise, the pay
That I must give, too grudgingly,
To get what should be rendered to me free:

Unstinting praise from men for my good deeds
Which should be done with no reward in mind,
Except to make a no thing of those needs
Which buried folk alive, and help them find
A new beginning. This should be the way
My chantry-priest receives his fee to pray;

II

For well we know that knights of olden times
Paid handsomely for masses in their name,
Because the ones who wondered at their tombs,
Illiterate, saw eulogies in vain,
But yet could hear an echo of the gold
Which brought a kind of warmth to what was cold

And hard: the real blood enchaliced there
(At least to faith if not to sight) spelled life
Eternal to a statue's stony stare,
And monkish chant could pass for keen of grief
As long as those whose arms, there carved,
prevailed,
And could ensure it was for them it wailed.

But now the masses read. And read they shall,
If they are so inclined to now descend
These metered steps, to read upon the wall
Of this my tomb my verse, just how my end
Has justified my ragged means: my lines
That vanish to eternity in signs.

So thus it is: my ship for death, festooned
With leaves torn from the story of my life,
A rich thesaurus where each item, honed
From love and hate, from passion and from strife
Goes up in flames that blend with setting sun,
And sheds some light on what was lost, what won.

Except no one will read it, that's a fact -
Unless their own concerns will prompt them to.
Then my reflections in a mirror cracked
Become a virtual quarry for some new
Memorial to some one unknown to me
Which leaves no trace of what I used to be.

So that's the end of it, the full stop to
My life, the chiselled epitaph obscured
By overgrowth, my only hope a clue
In worn-out letters made out on the floor
Made smooth by those who come, then go
Of what the story was of those below.

DESPERADO

If I knew what the living of this life
Obtained, I would obtain it. All that strife,
Anxiety and hurt would contribute
To some exchequer full of meaning's loot
Which, plundered from the stinking hold
Of death, would help me to pay off, all told,
Those bitter creditors who lay in wait
At each day's wakening – not in this state
Of ignorance, bankrupt, without defence,
To give up hope without a recompense.
For once I rose, then fell. Again I rose
And staggered to this path. This one I chose,
To leave a trail (which will be overgrown within
Another lifetime) – not that I begin
Anew: my marks and tracks haphazard fell
Throughout this forest floor, which scarcely tell
Of feet that trod this way. For no-one cares.
Each too in isolation, lost, each fares
Towards a light too briefly glimpsed, before
A rush of wind removes what we just saw –
If not imagined. Then, sometimes, we look
To see if we can scry within the brook
From which we drink an image of the stars.
Instead, the canopy of boughs, like bars,
Blots out the sky, an ever-growing lid
Built by our past mistakes – nor can we bid
It stop. It grows and grows. The image of
The light which we remember up above
Gets dimmer as we go. And so our trail
Bequeaths no thing of value, and we fail
To teach to those who follow a true way.
We came. We stopped. We went. We had our say.
And whether night or day, it makes no sense:
Our toil receives no lasting recompense.

The arbit'ry division of the days
As hours, minutes, seconds; and the ways
In which these segments must be spent; and how
We should be happy and fulfilled; who bow
To, who revere; and where we are consigned
To at our death: all these make chains that bind
Us. We embrace these shackles, since the free
Must for themselves define what they must be –
What "happy" is, and what should make them sad,
And wherein dwells the good and where the bad.
Night brings no rest unless we lose ourselves
Inside a dream-world where our psyche delves
Into those wishes unfulfilled, beyond
The grasp of nightmare's reach, a pond
Beneath whose surface deep desire thrives
Without diminishing our thwarted lives;
A magic chalice where all beauty lives,
Which takes from no-one, ever – only gives
To all, and none must beg: its grace
Wells up to all, and all can find a place.
But dawn's cold light reveals it full of lies.
Best not to dream when we must close our eyes.

DISSENT

In this, the Sabbath vigil of my life, I found
Myself prostrate, all helpless on the ground,
For sin had made me blind. It was as though
Throughout my life I strayed, and did not know
Where I was going or from whence I came,
Just led by some ephemeral, dancing flame
Snuffed out once it was glimpsed, and dead to

sight

Before it could be fixed – the moth's mad flight
More full of rhyme and reason than my life,
Now so replete with grief and full of strife.

I've looked at ev'ry explanation that
There is of life, and none come near to sat-
Isfying all criteria of truth,
Or come up with the necessary proof
That they're the answer. All require a leap
Into absurdity – alright for sheep
Who find their comfort in conformity,
But useless for all lone-wolves such as me.
There is a way to make it work, of course,
Which is: to put on blinkers like a horse

And go just where the drayman tells you to.
But in your heart you'll know it to be true
That, even though you're willing to work hard,
All roads end up inside the knacker's yard.
“Arbeit macht frei” is true to a degree,
But not the way we wish that it could be.
A product of conception, you will be
From life aborted, howe'er belatedly.
Meanwhile, you strive where chance gives no
reward:
Your feeble hand upturns an empty gourd.

And so our ends are like a jelly-fish:
Sans spine, sans brain, a wat'ry upturned dish
Borne on through vastness we cannot perceive –
Still less control enough to steer. Believe
We may, but proof of purpose or a plan
Revealed consistently denied, we can
Not fabricate from our own stuff, for we
Are empty, blind, insensate, falsely free,
Borne on by tides, by winds, by currents, all
Uncomprehended, landing where we fall.

The birds seem free; no wonder, then, the dove
Is symbol of God's Spirit from above.
But what became of all the other birds
That Noah released, and of all the herds
Of beasts not taken to the ark? – They died.
And that same Spirit, free to tell, denied
Us details of their wretched fate. So we
Can go into oblivion. We are free
To die and be forgotten; the elect
Disclose God's will to naturally select.

Just like a snail I leave a glistening train
To be erased by the first fall of rain;
Or, like the scarab, roll a ball of dung,
My pyramid for when I have no tongue
To extol my own deeds. For like that bird,
(Though it may seem unlikely and absurd)
The phœnix, from the ashes (I surmise)
Once fire is spent I presently will rise
To live again; although we know within
That in this legend ashes are the "fin".

And yet I hope that soon this week will end,
That dawn will break, and broken hearts will
mend,

So that a wholesome Sabbath day will bring
Enlightened rest; that birds again will sing
Instead of fearsome rustlings in the dark;
And the whole world will be a pleasant park:
The wood in which we wandered just a copse,
A refuge for the timid beast, which hops
To cover, then comes out at will to see
The sunlight play, no need at all to flee

From hungry predator. A dream! As such
It does not heal, but just provides a crutch
For fractured consciousness, which seeks in vain
To mend its broken world, where only pain
Defines reality, and we are lame,
And cannot run, compete against, or tame
The ravening beast which seeks us, and devours
The meagre gleanings of successful hours.
The dawn will show a good God to be lies,
And noonday sun expose a Lord of Flies.

I know the time is nigh: the global scale
Has tipped towards destruction. Soon the tale
Of all man's deeds and misdeeds will just stop,
And end in silence. Sin's ripe fruit will drop
And smash upon the ground of all our being.
That ground may then remain, all else then fleeing,
As cold and hard as it has ever been,
Unheard, unsmelt, untouched and all unseen
By anything that mars the pristine scape
Of nothingness with any wanton shape

Irrelevant to Being-in-Itself -
All life placed on that continental shelf
Where fossils lay well out of sight and out
Of mind, mere rocks embedded there to flout
The law of life which says that we must change,
And we must use our power to arrange
Some continuity of gene, no noise
To rattle or disturb death's equipoise.
So Ida is our perpetuity,
Extinct and petrified where none can see.

APOCRYPHON

Four-times-four centuries out of view,
First born, then buried, then born anew,
Seth was my father, Eugnostos my groom,
Gongessos my midwife, Charaxio my tomb.
Through six-times-ten summers the dust-cloud of
gold

Released at my re-birth has brightly rolled
Around the globe - the Nile's gift of reeds
Kindled by knowledge and sowing light's seeds.
Though delivered third-hand to your perception,
I am, nonetheless, the Immaculate Conception.

THE TESTAMENT OF SOPHIA

Conceived immaculate, I nonetheless
Desired a thing exclusive to my Self:
Sophia exercised effective will,
With freedom to desire as she chose.
Conceiving Self, therefore, I hatched a scheme
Within the womb of what I thought was real.

But what I willed was not immaculate:
It marred the vision I had once enjoyed
While contemplating true reality.
He gazed upon the waters of the Deep,
And when he saw himself he laughed and said,
"I am 'I am'. There is no God but me."

His mother heard the godling's bombast; so
From then I knew what kind of thing he was.
I turned again in sorrow to my source
And caught a spark which turned to living flame
Fed by the fuel of love. That fire took shape,
And all that Matter sought to emulate

Appeared. No eye could but be opened at
The sight transcending every faculty,
Whose finger traced in letters of pure light,
"The One is one. There is no other One.
Unnamed, beyond all mortal register,
He is alone, unique, without a peer.

Since he does not subsist in time, He needs
No life that throbs with temporality,
Nor does he strive to overcome a lack,
For He is perfect in His boundless sphere.
Thus none can know that One except for one
Proceeding from the One, and that I am."

On meeting Matter then this testament
Fell to the Deep as incandescent drops
Towards that space and time where nature's laws
Are fetters from which none can be exempt;
Where all must yearn for what there might have
been,
With that eternal "now" beyond their ken.

Yet what descended still remains unquenched,
Although imprisoned in a tomb of clay:
We know of our beginning, and our end,
From whence we came, and whither we must go.
A mere reflection of His light, I shed
What light I have, proclaiming all I know.

THE GNOSIS

The Gnosis issued forth, and stood at once
In rank with Forethought, born to mother true,
Who by her wish had helped to bring him forth.
The One whose sight blinds mortal eye was glad
To see effulgent fruit swell on His bough,
And He anointed him with chrism pressed
From His own goodness, and from His own store
Of overflowing virtue's essence, pure.
And thus endowed, he waited on his source,
And added to the glory that no eye
Can see of his progenitor, and His
Prevenient grace, the matrix of the All.

SOPHIA

IALDABAOTH

But she desired a thing exclusive to
Herself. This thought was not inert, and so
It reified: short of perfection, shorn
Of that ideal beauty typical
Of her who gave him birth, a thwarted clone
Of one true-born of heavenly gene and stock,
All self-engendered, selfishly conceived.
The One had not engaged or wed with her
In union divine; no spouse or sire
Had courted her consent, no nuptial bliss
Had blessed the product of chaste amity;
For what she willed was without conference
Of family, or consummation of
Conjugal love; concupiscence instead,
Without relationship, a fantasy impure,
And alien to the hymns its Mother sang
When in accord with her pure ancestry.
In this her wish came true: a monster formed,
A snake with lion-jaws and eyes that blazed
With horrid fire of self-will. She cast
Him out, beyond the zone of purity
Where he might not be seen by all her peers:
From Wisdom born, in ignorance to dwell.
She gave her child a name, as it befits
A ruler who inherits a great power:
It is Ialdabaoth, Matter's Prince.
Ialdabaoth strutted forth, and marched
From place to place, far from the place where he
Was born. And annexing still more he formed
Self-glorifying spheres of fire that still
Flare on unto this day in heaven's dome.
The Mother then became aware of her
Deficiency, and how her light had dimmed.
For when she saw her blemishes within

The light of the Pleroma, she then drew
Across her face a veil of darkness: she
No longer could return her consort's smile
Without deception, and be unabashed.
Her holy fear caused her to hover at
The gate of Truth, unable to go in.
For when her offspring in his arrogance
Had taken power from his Mother he
Was ignorant of any provenance
And thought her womb was all that there had been.
Infatuated with his handiwork,
He placed himself upon a pedestal,
An idol to himself.

METANOIA

And so she turned;
And so was heard in her humility.
For now she knew what kind of thing he was,
And how he lacked perfection's symmetry.
Up to her source she raised her tear-filled eyes.
He gave the consent, and so a healing flood
Of cleansing holiness washed over her
To make her whole; for Providence agreed
To supervise her in austerity
Within a place of penance set aside
Beyond carnality and snares of sin,
Where she could re-acquire her modesty.

THE ARCHONS

Then raising his right hand - his arrogance -
He masturbated, got Authorities,
Egged on by fantasies of unknown realms.
And as Sophia's light within him shone
And gave him unique power: because of this
He blasphemously called himself a god.
So he created seven Angels, each with Powers
Sufficient for a year of days, and all
In mimicry of that intuited
From what was long before. But those whom he
Begot, those children of the ignorance
And dark, lacked intimation of the source
And principle from which all things had come.
A week of angels this way rules the world.
But Ialdabaoth, who is Saklas, has
A multitude of faces, more than all,
So he can show himself in any face,
Just as he wills. He shares his nature with
Them - everything except the pristine power
That he drew from his Mother, Wisdom: that
He would not share. This made him cosmic lord,
Conferring - as he thought - divinity
Upon his minion powers. And their "god"
Gave each a place to dwell, a so-called "heaven".
Their urge to rule instilled makes them believe
That they are gods; but Truth is not deceived:
Their bestial natures are revealed to those
Who know. Their god-like attributes are part
And parcel of a fantasy dreamed up
By Saklas; but illusion will not have
Its way - except with those who dwell within
The dream. The light of Truth will chase away
The mist, dissolve its shifting, swirling shapes

Which frightened those who were deceived, like
masks

Pinned onto wind-puffed cloaks. Such images
Invoke some dread reality, from which
They draw their fearful influence and power.
And so it was with these, for Saklas shaped
His schemes upon a kind of memory
Of what he had experienced in the womb
Of what is truly real. And when he saw
The world he had created all laid out,
And gazed upon the panoply which he
Had spun, enveloping his nakedness,
His tongue clapped in his bell, and said:
'I am a jealous God. There is no God
But me.' And so in his stupidity
He gave the game away, and told his friends
There was a God who spurned divinity
The title to this insane jealousy.

ANTHROPOS

And then a voice came forth: Behold the Man!
And when the chieftain of the Powers heard
He had no inkling of from whence it came.
At once, however - ignorant or not -
They were aware - to their damnation - that
There was a holy, perfect Source above:
The Mother-Father, Parents who brought forth
All that there is, and whose beneficence
Was now displayed in dazzling Anthropos.
A shiver went through Ialdabaoth's world,
And rippled through its fundamental sands.
And in the sky the purest element,
Transfigured by the bright epiphany,
Revealed that Truth is Beauty, Beauty Truth.
And so the carnal gang beheld a light
Infuse the cavern of the world below.
Their eyes were opened, and they saw revealed
The shimmering glory of the Son of Man.

ADAM

The upstart god addressed his fawning clan:
'Come let us make a thing like what we saw
To give some aim and purpose to our plans.'
So each and every one of them then gave
A little something from his psychic pouch,
And made an entity from out themselves,
Each adding layer on layer of plastic stuff,
Along the lines of what they had just seen.
Thus a reflection creaturely became,
And looked just like the sole original -
The perfect Anthropos. And then they said,
'Now let us call him Adam, that his name
May light our high road to imperium.'
And so this wondrous work, this body came
About - not yet of flesh, but harbouring
A vital force that tapped the secrets of
Their universe, their sevenfold harmony,
Encapsulated microcosmically
In sense and a potential agency.
And yet there was something in short supply:
The thing had no vocation to fulfil,
And thus no will to try, and lay inert.
No aspiration graced the dawning day.
Sophia wanted to retrieve the power
Which she had given to her bastard son.
In innocence she came and humbly asked
The Mother-Father of transcendent All
Who is most merciful. And He decreed
That Gnosis should go down to that cold place
Where ignorance prevails. His mission was
To liberate the power from Saklas' breast
Sophia's gift - by sowing in his mind
A seed of thought which he, unwittingly,
Would think his own, and thereby bring forth Life.

And so this thought came unsolicited
To Ialdabaoth: 'Blow into his mouth
Your holy breath, and what you made will rise.'
And so, unwittingly, the demiurge
Released the prison door: the pneuma fled
From out those boastful lips, and found a home
By transmigrating to the psychic breast
Of Adam, tabernacling in a shrine
They patterned on what they had briefly glimpsed
Of holiest of holy from afar.
That body stretched its limbs and waxed in
strength,
Transfigured by the glory of true life.
Elsewhere, within the stony hearts of all
The Powers the bitter weed of envy sprang,
For they believed this fragrant bloom was fed
By them - that their hearts' blood had soaked the
soil
From whence it sprang, and that it was their own
Vitality that ran along the veins
Of that bright Man. Their flaws exposed by his
Wise luminosity, they cast him in
A pit, and heaped around him all their dung,
The heavy execrescence of their days.
So Adam came within the mortal sphere,
Coiled there and then of base material,
Engendered from desire within the dark,
Enlivened by a soulless breath, mere air.
Thus was our fetter forged, our dungeon made,
By which these bandits now enslaved the Man,
Who, in the darkness, soon forgot the light
And grew accustomed to the stench of death.

HEIMARMENE

This was the fall to end all falls, the end
Confounding all true ends. And yet not quite:
The One, then brimming with parental love,
At once felt pity for His spirit-kind
Which Saklas had unknowingly released,
But which still wandered in the orbit of
The Powers, an orphan of a kingly line
Without a regent, subject to the whim
Of upstart tyrants thrall themselves to time.
And Saklas, when he saw a light had shed,
Found ways to make this earth a darker place.
For when he realised that we surpassed
Him in our loftiness of consciousness,
He wanted to appropriate our mind,
Not wise enough himself to realise
That his desire was well beyond his grasp.
He made a plan with his authorities,
And by incestuous union with their dam,
Heimarmene was made. Thus the supreme
And cruellest jailer then came into being,
With her array of manacles and chains
Called "times" and "seasons", "moments", "ages",
"dates",
Those fetters from which none could be exempt
Outside the All, nor gods nor mortal men,
Now doomed to live within a space of time
That was the past, or will be days to come -
But never now, the present never seized,
With minds obsessed with what will be and what
There might have been, with schemes and plans
stretched to
Infinity, but that eternal "now"
Beyond their ken. And hence the consciousness
Of the Beyond eluded us again.

And furthermore Man was engenderised,
By which the husband, stronger than the wife
In limb, for males might claim a spiritual
Domain irrelevant to Truth derived
From high authority - for Saklas knew
He must divide and rule. And then he cast
Them out of Paradise, and caused the sky
To frown, and made the ground to freeze, and
forced
The couple to seek shelter in dark caves.

SETH

And Saklas gazed on Eve, whose graceful limbs
Were bathed in gnostic glamour from above,
And lust flared in his heart, and a desire
To penetrate that awesome mystery,
And colonise her belly with his seed.
So Saklas raped poor Eve, and in due course
Two sons were born, and Cain and Abel named;
And thanks to Saklas, these his bastards were
Endowed with seed to replicate themselves,
The psychic and the carnal; one inspired
By wind, the other by Sophia's ghost.
Meanwhile, within a place of Life the Man
Called Adam met the Woman Eve, and each
Encountering each within their very core
Begot the Son of Man called Seth, the true
Descendant of Sophia in the line
Of Anthropos. This son was blessed by those
On high, and his anointed offspring to
Eternity, for these are called to dwell
Within perfection's courts, and taught to spell
Their names inscribed upon the scroll of Life,
While monuments to flesh collapse upon
The soil of sin. For those who truly live
Cannot abide the dark, and they must light
A lamp and visit all the catacombs
Where the enlightened have been forced to dwell
And lead them to the sunlight up above.
Thus shall the righteous gather, and assist
Each other on the way, that true mankind
Might find its rightful place within the All,
And holiness, made whole, might be complete.

B. APHORISMS

1. The world is a place of wounds. Wounds to the spirit bleed venom in the soul. Staunth the flow of venom into a poisoned world.
2. Pay heed to the words of those whom men call "Saviour" and "Enlightened" - provided that they help you towards liberation. But beware the Powers. Their subtlety enables them to invade every corner of the universe, and turn even the most opulent of gifts into an engine of slavery.
3. Beware those who claim detachment, but are in fact disaffected. Spurned lovers of the world, they gladly return to her arms if beckoned.
4. Beware answers. Beware guides. Beware the Powers, whose gifts are snares. Beware the leaders of men. Beware schemes and systems. Beware rewards and punishments. Beware the world.
5. Behold the idiot who leads men to the Truth! Behold the man of intellect who beckons to his sty!
6. Suffer much, say little, understand most.
7. The will to power manifests itself in hierarchies, systems, strange terminologies, and all the paraphernalia which gives the pilgrim cause to stumble. Beware such "gnosis" and its occult science.
8. The way to salvation is through transcendence of the self. This may be through thought or action. Transcend the will to power and thus find freedom.

9. In your heart is a hungry worm that grows until your heart is gone, then feeds upon itself. Trust what your heart tells you, yet deny it. Sharpen your wit, then throw it away. Exercise your mind, then let it be at rest. Welcome the paradox, but do not worship it. Our world was made by Samael. We name the parts with the tongue he gave. His is the Word, but his is not the Truth.

10. Understanding is obscured by the delirium brought on by wealth, power, or worldly beauty. Those most committed to the illusion, and who fail to grasp the true nature of things, succeed in the eyes of the world. Those who sit in judgment always find for themselves. Seek the spiritual man, therefore, among those whom the world condemns. The man who turns his back on the rewards of this world must also bare it to stripes.

11. Bend beneath the blows of the Powers, and so avoid hurt.

12. You sift the dust for tiny nuggets of truth. But you stare at the ground because you walk on all fours. Raise your head above the earth and look to the stars, where you may contemplate the Wisdom already known to you.

13. Forgive! - know the cause of injurious deeds, or your heart will be a worm that feeds upon itself.

14. Do not suppose that spiritual status is in any way related to worldly accomplishments. Behold the crippled idiot who leads men to the Truth! Behold the man of intellect and prowess who uses the gifts of nature to extend his sty!

15. There are those who deny the gods, but few can escape the Powers. Refusing to enter the labyrinth of deception, they bivouac in the vestibule.

Rejecting the greater gods of the Temple, they fall prey to the meaner gods of the hearth. Clear the grime from the window and gaze on the world outside.

16. Let the mind of carnal man be leavened by the powers-that-be to feed the self. We instead share the simple fare of detachment as we journey together to the Truth.

17. Be compassionate. To understand folly is to forgive.

18. These are not "revelations". These are rather messages from my true self to my true self witnessed by the rest of the world. They are Gnosis made Word, and the waters that are drawn from this well will quench the thirst of many.

19. Sacrifice on the altar of matter is in vain. Yet perhaps Sophia has a place for which her carnal offspring are destined.

20. The Gnostic will not run with the herd or the pack; the wrath of the Archons is therefore inflamed.

21. Those who know say least. But for those who share in the nature of the One there is eternity. "Show us the One who brings freedom", you demand. I can not. The One finds a path.

22. The spirit suffers in flesh the enmity of the Powers. Our souls cry out at injury to the flesh, but these injuries dissolve with the flesh that gave them birth. None are victims of "evil". All are victims of the world.

23. The fool Creates patterns of cause and effect - the fat are blessed, the lean are cursed - then traces all to "God". But the fat are not praiseworthy; the lean are not to blame.

24. When Ialdabaoth made the cannibal coil within eternity, it was on the basis of laws neither right nor wrong.

25. Without map, without scrip, without shoes, some arrive before they set out. The land is theirs; they are the kingdom. The One can only be perceived by those who share by their very natures in the transcendent Reality.

26. All things rise from and fall into the dust, with a beauty that cannot be seized.

27. Decay is part and parcel of the material world: ideas decay; beliefs decay. These things do not matter to the Spiritual; neither does it matter if, over aeons of time, the Truth is buried. Indeed, at times the Truth should be prepared for burial.

28. Wisdom can never be seen by all; the quest is in vain.

29. The One can only be perceived by those who share by their very natures in the transcendent Reality.

30. The Truth is not to be discovered through any personal relationship - for the root of all bonding of separates is carnal. Only pure Knowledge saves: the knowledge that knows itself by itself, uncontaminated by affection.

31. There is no appeal to reason here; there is only an appeal to knowledge. Those who know will recognise what they know: argument is unnecessary.

32. The issue is freedom. "Show us the One who brings freedom", you demand. I can not. Only the One knows the One. The One trapped in flesh seeks liberation, and finds a path. The slave dreams of becoming the master. Yet the master is also a slave. The true goal is to transcend the will to power and so find freedom.

33. For the spiritual man "salvation" is not an issue. The spark can never be lost, though the whole world fall back into confusion. The issue is liberation. The means of liberation is knowledge.

34. Can the unborn child picture its birth? Can the Spiritual imagine the freedom which will be theirs?

35. No "God" will release his slaves. His chains are subtle. They are forged with fear. And the anger of his priests is unbounded against those who will not accept his manacles. For the priest is a slave who dreams himself master; awake from all dreams and you will be free.

36. Through knowledge, the spiritual man will avoid that which makes thickens the prison walls. And he will turn his gaze to he window, and the stars beyond, and see what his captors, to their perpetual rage, will never see.

37. Spurning the vows of the devotee, they make their pledge to wealth, family and status. They hear the roar of the beast and serve it. We are called to slay it, and to press on to the gate that leads to Life.

38. Ialdabaoth has a multitude of colours, and can present foliage according to his desire. And yet he is a stump. His branches decay, his fruit is rotten.

39. Can all men be saved? - The carnal and the psychic will always worship the Archons. (The spiritual man may also be seduced along this path). These powers, including the demiurge, are but the vices of such men elevated to a principle.

40. You entertain a doubt that the alleged powers and the supposed path of liberation exist only in the mind. How can this be so? If the mind of man is a product of nature, is it not impressed with the shape of things from outside itself? If the powers exist in the mind of man, then they were put there by the powers. If the path of liberation leads beyond the mind, is it not a liberation from the powers? Admire the Powers, and spurn them. Never underestimate them: their vigour is real.

41. The Carnal, ever limited by their nature, see only idols that may gratify their manifold needs.

42. The lips of the messenger are frozen in stone.

43. The bellies of the Carnal need leavened bread.
44. Those most committed to the illusion, and who fail to grasp the true nature of things, succeed in the eyes of the world.
45. That which overturns matter is seen as a destroyer by those in thrall to the Powers.
46. Though there is more than one path, there is only one goal: transcendence of "self".
47. The Spiritual meets enlightenment as logos, the Psychic as mythos.
48. To leave the womb is to escape a grave. To abandon security is to leave death behind.
49. The slave dreams of becoming the master. Yet the true goal is to transcend the will to power and so find freedom.
50. The Gnostic "revelation" is provisional - a celebration of the riches of the Truth in currency whose value fluctuates, and much of which is base metal. No-one has a monopoly which it comes to the manner in which the truth is expressed.
51. The three human kinds exist because of the way that the universe has come about, and not by election.
52. Gems of Truth may be lodged in poor settings.
53. Your "good" is self-serving, your "morality" an instrument of prey.

54. The Carnal is the world. The Psychic perceives a world. The Spiritual knows a prison.

55. Being order in matter, Ialdabaoth's is the Word.

56. Notions of "good" are corrupted by consideration of the provisional, the transitory, the self-serving. Yet there is a kind of "good". That which tends towards the One is "good" because it tends to what is real.

57. To the tribes the spiritual is of no account; to the leaders he is invisible. The virtue of the spiritual man is detachment, and this leaves no mark for the eyes of the world to behold. The spiritual man does not pursue wealth, so all the world sees is poverty. The spiritual man does not pursue power, so all the world sees is weakness. The spiritual man does not seek fullness, so the world despises an empty thing.

58. The spirit is trapped in this world, and the flesh demands belonging. And so the spiritual man chooses his place of belonging on the grounds of compassion.

59. There are three paths to the One: the path of action, the path of devotion, and the path of knowledge, but the surest of these is the path of knowledge. Yet none is strong against idolatry.

60. Our detractors accuse us of negativity, of pessimism, of denial. So be it. It is they who refuse to confront the dissatisfaction that eats at their hearts like a hungry worm.

61. The benighted may not see the light, because their eyes have closed in the darkness. And yet to those who eyes are pierced by the light he gives power to become sons of light: the flame already in them grows stronger.

62. Where, then, is healing to be found? The Pneuma is present in the world - not only in some men, but in the order of events. But to the world, its order is disorder.

63. To side with the Demiurge is to side with order. A tyrant is benevolent as long as we enjoy his favour. But the supporter of a tyrant should always be ready to see himself put to death for the sake of order.

64. Souls are not hedged by race or by class, by gender or by age; Faith-Wisdom does not spring from brain or tongue.

65. The material world is real enough, but that reality is hierarchical. That is, matter is not evil - simply inferior.

66. The Truth, like the royal state, does not reside in the flesh of one person. "The king is dead. Long live the king!"

67. The criminal and victim are one. The judge must select by caprice, then assert a justice beyond reproach. But the fat are not worthy of praise nor the lean of blame. The righteous men slain by the oppressor even as they offer sacrifice, or the pilgrims crushed by the falling tower at the holy place - they do not receive their just desert.

68. The world is a place of deception. This deception is promoted by the angels of Ialdabaoth and their servants, and is expressed in superstitious practices: idols and altars and temples and sacrifices and libations to the Powers. Religious language itself may be a stumbling-block in the path of Truth: thus one who hears the word "God" does not perceive what is correct, but perceives deception. It is necessary to turn away from deception in order to be free of the powers; the Spiritual are able to overcome deception with Truth. What do you perceive the emptiness with? Perhaps you apprehend it with the Truth within - if there is Truth within. If, on the other hand, there is no Truth within, then you only see and feel what your flesh and its psychic servant likes or loathes.

69. That which overturns matter is seen as a destroyer by those in thrall to the Powers.

70. The Carnal, ever limited by their nature, see only idols that may gratify their manifold needs.

71. The true centre of our being resides elsewhere. This is both our peace and our restlessness, our stillness and our urge.

72. The spark can never be lost, thought the whole world fall back into confusion.

73. The impulse to order is genuinely divine; the impulse to worship order is not.

74. The powers do not change men for the better.
They simply confirm them in their corruption.
Those who worship the powers worship their own
carnal natures and are controlled entirely by
instinct.

75. The tyrant is himself a prisoner.

76. The One knows the One. What need has the
One to pray? Our wills attend on the One; what
need have we to pray?

77. Despair of the world brings hope.

78. Will is the fundamental principle of all
independent life.

79. The Psychic may choose the Light, and because
this choice transcended nature, something may be
reborn.

80. Enlightenment is the gift of the few to the many.

81. Though there is more than one path, there is
only one goal: transcendence of "self".

82. Nothing can come between the Spiritual and
eventual bliss.

83. To the tribes the spiritual is of no account; to the
leaders he is invisible.

84. Zeal in reform is commendable; holy war is
good. But this is not our way, for we are the
ultimate subversive.

85. Some ages may sink into a depravity which guarantees their eventual extinction in the way of all flesh.

86. As regards prayer: what need have those whose wills attend on the One to ask for anything?

87. It is those most committed to the illusion who succeed in the eyes of the world. It is those who succeed in the eyes of the world who fail to grasp the true nature of things.

88. There is one System, one illusion. It has a demonic beauty, and torments us.

89. The fool Creates patterns of cause and effect - the fat are blessed, the lean are cursed - then traces all to "God". God is not supreme. Miracles do not happen. This is because matter came into being before God, and God himself cannot change the iron laws of the material universe. Because he does not possess the ultimate spiritual supremacy, he is unable to "save" us.

90. A mediator may take a costly gift to appease a tyrant and win favours from him. To suppose that God is such a ruler is a notion unworthy of God or of His true worshippers, and will attract only those intent on suing the Deity for favours. There are always those who seek to make a profession of mediation. Entry to the Kingdom by those who are its citizens needs no such mediation and therefore no priesthood.

91. Ialdabaoth is not the ultimate authority. But being order in matter, his is the Word.

92. None are victims of something called "evil". All are victims of the way the world is - the inexorable laws of nature. Events may be purgatives for the purification of Spirit, but pain refines the gold; it does not place it in the heart.

93. True consciousness is a cross to bear: there is no sense of moral superiority to motivate; there is no covenant with a personal god to inspire; and there is no divine providence to comfort. Consciousness is an end in itself.

94. In the flesh the gap between saint and sinner is imperceptible. "God" must base his selection on caprice, then assert a justice beyond argument and reproach. Such is the way of the tyrant Ialdabaoth, himself the prisoner of iron laws.

95. The Spiritual can not be identified by any physical, mental or moral characteristics. And because the world is irredeemable, there is no point in forming an organisation which promotes faith. There can be no scripture, no sacrifice, and no priesthood.

96. Anything experienced is, by its nature, less than true reality. The enlightened possess true perspective as part of their nature - it cannot be acquired by effort or by manipulation of the cognitive, emotive or sensory environment.

97. If the existence of neither Revealer nor Revealed can be recognised as authorities higher than the allegedly "supreme" Ialdabaoth, then both, dimly perceived, have to be imported into the deity. But their subjection makes idols of them.

98. There are those who say, "We have the keys to salvation. Salvation is easy. Simply do as we say!" There are those who say, "You enjoy a worldly prosperity. That in itself is a sign of grace. Come and join our ranks, and add to that the assurance of salvation!" There are those who say, "Salvation is an amusing game that adds spice to our comfortable lives. Come and join us: realise your full potential!" How subtle and persuasive are the powers! - not the dumb idols we habitually suppose them to be!

99. Those who are supposed to be guardians of spiritual matters - the scribes, the teachers, the priests - are no less open to corruption than the infidels. Only the gift of suffering strips such corruption away and raises head and voice above the edge of the prison wall.

100. The comfort of rites is a comfort of sleep, where materiality is dreamed as order and justice.

101. People may use a mediator in their dealings with God, but to do so presupposes that there are two classes of human beings, one of which is closer to God.

102. If you pray to God, then it is Ialdabaoth; if he comes to your aid then it is Saklas.

103. Knowledge is not the gift of a just god. It is that which offers refuge from an unjust Demiurge, who disposes of his illusory riches capriciously, and leads the recipients to ignorance and eternal night.

104. "Show us the One who gives liberation", you demand. I can not. Only the One knows the One. The One trapped in the mind of flesh seeks liberation, and finds a path. Knowledge is not a gift. It is the right and the burden of those imprisoned yet already free.

105. We say "Not this" and "Not that", and dissatisfaction eats at your heart like a hungry worm.

106. The One is unnamed and ineffable, the source of all being.

107. The One is pure. He does not strive, since He lacks nothing. He is unnamed, and there is none for whom He yearns.

108. The Carnal and the Psychic will always worship the Powers, for they are their vices raised to a principle. The carnal man who sacrifices his own self for his family or friends does a noble thing, even if he is acting under instinct. This instinct is indeed a higher impulse than the drive to self-preservation. There is some sense in which nature is refined by it. It creates a window in matter for the Fullness to be revealed. But the carnal man himself is not "saved" by sacrifice. He has no "self" to save.

109. The Eternal Being's fullness is by nature apart from matter, but has become widely scattered and briefly detained in the world because of an accident.

110. Purity was divided; thus "He" became "they".

111. The One in us perceives beyond mortal ken; this is "Gnosis".

112. From the One came the All. Only the One knows the One. And those who seek proof of the One need only to acknowledge their yearning.

113. The utterances of the spiritual are the Word of the One.

114. Transcendence of this world is not an experience open to all. Wisdom derives from a perspective rather than an experience. Hence the quest for induced enlightenment is fruitless.

115. For true Gnostics there is no providence. The Spiritual are trapped and are returning through the aeons by paths of liberation which are difficult, and known only by themselves. Yet liberation is assured.

116. May the One reach out to the knowledge within you and draw you to the ultimate goal.

117. The True Reality is beyond us. This One can not be perceived by anything other than the One. The One can only ever be described in terms of the One.

118. The material world is real enough, but that reality is hierarchical. That is, matter is not evil - simply inferior. This perspective on the material world is related to an insight into the way things have come to be as they are.

119. Myth must negate itself in the telling if idols are not to be engendered.

120. There are no sacraments. "Salvation" is in knowledge, a knowledge that cannot be conferred.

121. In the first phase survival is all. Ruled by the Powers, whom we name as gods, we seek to bend them our will by bribes and flattery, by submission or intimidation. Then we create patterns of cause and effect. Gratification is reward, denial is punishment: the fat are blessed, the lean are cursed. And we trace all causes to one cause, whom we call "God". Soon we see that the fat are not praiseworthy nor the lean worthy of blame. So our patterns become more tenuous: our ancestors were righteous or sinners, or we ourselves in a previous life. But this rightly offends a sense of justice, and so we find a second source for evil, or propose that god's ways are inscrutable to men. And so we wait in vain for the overcoming of the one, or the revelation of the other.

122. Nomos is not a cosmic force: human behaviour is affected by but cannot affect the laws of nature.

123. Suffering is not caused by transgression, and death cannot be overcome by obedience to law.

124. It is not possible for anyone to state the destiny of humankind beyond death. But because God is eternal, that destiny too is eternal, for true mankind is in the mind of God. Those who seek the truth about their destiny in order to fulfil it join their wills with the Will of God and may therefore participate in the eternity of the Divine Nature.

125. The principle which guides us has no beginning and no end. We are heirs to eternal Truth and Life, and we are trustees of the Way.

126. If the Powers exist in the mind, were they not put there by the Powers? The path that leads beyond is a liberation.

127. The universe and events within it, are without meaning. There is no good news to proclaim. An account of primeval events merely enables whoever has ears to hear it to derive some comfort from understanding their true predicament in this material universe.

128. None are victims of something called "evil". The Petrines seek to exonerate their God by blaming man. But when Jehovah manufactured this cannibal coil within eternity, he made it on the basis of laws which had nothing to do with right or wrong. All are victims of the way the world is - the inexorable laws of nature.

129. It would be nonsense to say that the carnal man is "saved" by sacrifice. He has no "self" to save.

130. Some ages may strive towards understanding in the manner of the animate man. Such cultures may become transfused with enlightenment, but such enlightenment is the gift of the few to the many.

131. The enemy is "in here" as well as "out there". Mark well how the Powers are at work in our hearts. Admire them while spurning them. Never underestimate them: their strength is armed with cunning. Yet bend beneath their blows, and so avoid hurt.

132. The most primitive religion seeks the renewal of nature by fertility. The more advanced religion seeks the renewal of society by justice. The highest religion seeks the transcendence of matter by Spirit.

133. If we cling to these notions of "good" and "justice" we merely increase the suffering of the self. Leave good and evil behind with the self, and go to where no thing exists, and yet All is.

134. There is a question which you dare not ask because you know it is foolish. Let me frame it for you: "Where is God to be found?" It has been answered many a time by the sages, but heard only by fools. God is within ourselves.

135. My aim is not to establish systems. My aim is to call forth those who share the Gnosis, to summon the invisible community of knowledge and insight. I invite all the Spiritual to celebrate here with me the Consciousness which we always have shared, and always will, that we may enjoy it together at our Source in greater measure to all eternity.

136. Struggle from the chrysalis of this world and take wing to regions which are intimated only by yearning. Those who seek proof of the One need only to acknowledge this yearning. Their despair is the harbinger of hope.

137. Marriage to the world is prostitution, in which the whore demands not only a fee, but a retainer for her services, and the husband is client to his own pimp.

138. Notions of "good" are corrupted by consideration of the provisional, the transitory, the self-serving. These weave the sticky thread of the illusory reality of this world. Morality may be an instrument of prey for the freedom of the self.

139. That which overturns the iron necessity of matter is seen as a Destroyer by those in thrall to the Powers. Men of knowledge, however, are able to read such events as signs which are effective to the healing of the Spirit.

140. The land is ours; we are the kingdom. What need have we of a king?

142. If we cling to notions of "good" and "justice" we merely increase the suffering of the self. Leave good and evil behind with the self, and go to where no thing exists, and yet All is.

143. Discourse with one's fellow spiritual beings brings the purest pleasure this world can offer: it is memories of youth and dreams of happy old age. For the spiritual man knows that one day, no matter how long the term of the sentence, and how protracted the torments inflicted by those who for a day lord it over him, he will return to his home in the One, to be lost - and found - forever in the bliss of union.

144. Three things are necessary to start out on the path to enlightenment: first, a culture; second, a religion; third, suffering. One is the soil, one the sunshine, the other the rain. But the seed comes only from the One.

145. We perceive, we analyse, we interpret, we mould, we subjugate reality to ourselves. And we say that the root of our systems is "God" - a god made in our own image. When we worship this image, we worship ourselves.

146. Where, then, is Truth to be found? I can only tell you - since I can only use words out of falsehood - where Truth is not to be found.

147. The Eternal Being's Fullness is by nature apart from matter, but has become widely scattered and briefly detained in the world because of an accident. Those who share the Transcendent show their true natures by detachment from carnality and a compassion for those who suffer false hope about the possibilities of this world.

148. The spirit suffers in flesh the enmity of the Powers. Our souls cry out at injury to the flesh, but these injuries dissolve with the flesh that gave them birth. None are victims of "evil". All are victims of the world.

149. We hear the cries. Ialdabaoth is powerless to overcome the iron laws which lead to suffering and death.

150. The enlightened are so by nature.

151. Because the original Intuition cannot be denied or negated even under the sway of idolatry, the true end of intelligence is perceived deep within the heart. Because it cannot be denied, it expresses itself in human aesthetic activity. It is as a result of this that Beauty may be found within the material world.

152. The message is an expression of the spiritual man's sublimity. Worship of the messenger shows the psychic man's mendacity aided and abetted by the carnal man's stupidity.

153. Transcendence of this world is not an experience open to all. Wisdom or "enlightenment" derives from a perspective rather than an experience. Hence the quest for enlightenment as an experience induced by meditation is fruitless.

154. Though there is more than one path to the goal, the ultimate aim and end of all true Life is to transcend that illusion which we call the "self". The Way is not to give up one's own "self" in order simply to be absorbed into another "self". Religion offers many such illusory paths.

155. The benighted may not see the light, because their eyes have closed in the darkness.

156. Ialdabaoth believed himself to be supreme. In order to enlighten him (and simultaneously to chastise him) the Pleroma had to reveal the Spiritual to the Material, thereby causing some of the latter to be ensnared and temporarily abandoned by the return of the Immaculate to the Fullness.

157. We hear the cries. Ialdabaoth is powerless to overcome the iron laws which lead to suffering and death.

158. When Ialdabaoth manufactured this cannibal coil within eternity, he made it on the basis of laws which had nothing to do with right or wrong. None are victims of something called "evil". The criminal and victim are one. Such events may be purgatives for the purification of Spirit, but pain refines the gold; it does not place it in the heart.

159. Only those who know are saved - not from pain, but from the deeper torment and waste of self-delusion.

160. The three kinds of men - carnal, animate and spiritual - exist because of the way that the universe has come about, and not as a result of some capricious act of election on the part of a demiurge.

161. If there is good news to be brought to the world concerning its redemption, its messenger must speak the same language as the world and be at home with its ways. The Gnostic, however, is a stranger and alien in the world. He can in no way proclaim a message which will enable his hearers to be reconciled to the world.

162. There is comfort, nevertheless, for the Spiritual - and only the Spiritual - in knowing (or rather, recognising, since he already knows) the cause of his exile, and the character of his home. Reclining in the walled garden of the gathered, the Teacher brings the purest pleasure of this world: shared memories of youth and dreams of labours past. The sage brings news of home.

163. Man is mortal, but Pistis-Sophia can never die; Man is weak, but Pistis-Sophia has mastery of all that endures.

164. Pistis-Sophia is not hedged by race or by class, by intelligence, language, gender or age.

165. The carnal man is part of the material world. The animate man perceives that he is part of this world and seeks either to alter or retain his position within it. To the spiritual man, however, the natural world is a prison. But the spark can never be lost, though the whole world fall back into confusion.

166. Carnal man is ignorant of the supreme being and will return to entirely to matter. Meanwhile, ever limited by his nature, he clings to idols that may gratify his manifold needs. For, in him matter is dominant. This dominance manifests itself in a preoccupation with the consumption necessary to maintain material integrity. His desire to bring order into matter is simply an expression of a desire to dominate it.

167. The Psychic may remove his self from the centre of things, and by so doing turn his back on the world.

168. Spiritual man has the capacity to know fully the supreme being, and his ultimate destiny is to enter into complete union with that supreme being; for spiritual man uniquely within the material universe shares the nature of the supreme being.

169. The prime virtue of the spiritual man is detachment, and this leaves no mark for the eyes of the world to behold.

170. The difference between the Spiritual and the non-Spiritual is not simply one of belief: the non-Spiritual is actually incapable of grasping what the Spiritual is talking about.

171. The insights of the spiritual may be manifest as deeds, utterances or decrees. They may be enshrined in histories, codes or rituals. Their form may be poetic, philosophical or legislative. But beyond all these is the Word of enlightenment which comes from the One.

172. The Carnal seek investment, not beauty.

173. The Carnal Man is subject to Ialdabaoth's laws. The Spiritual Man has to overcome the world. But the Psychic Man strives actively to promote the principles on which the world was founded, and thereby compounds its suffering.

174. The animate man who re-orders his universe may become a means for the Light to shine in the darkness. And because this choice transcended nature, something of him may be saved for re-birth further along the path to the One.

175. The spiritual man meets enlightenment as truth and is helped towards liberation.

176. Those who sit in judgment always find for themselves. Seek the spiritual man, therefore, among those whom the world condemns.

177. For the spiritual man salvation is not an issue. The spark can never be lost, though the whole world fall back into confusion. The issue is liberation. The means of liberation is knowledge.

178. The animate man meets enlightenment as mythos. This myth may enable him to shape his life into the pattern of Truth, thus making way for the Logos.

179. Those who are heirs to the Truth are not recipients of some inscrutable "grace": they participate in Truth by nature. The question then is not the root of the Creator's caprice, but how the Heirs of Truth became trapped in matter.

180. The gifts given by the spiritual man are in themselves their own proof of value to the discriminating, the recipient possessed of inbred taste. The carnal are like the vulgar who need advice on how to furnish their house and are seeking investment rather than beauty.

181. It may be that in some way which is beyond our comprehension the sacrifice made by the carnal man creates a door (I speak metaphorically) in matter for the emissary of the Fullness to enter.

182. The insights of the spiritual may be focused into gems which attract the light, although these jewels may be lodged in poor settings.

183. Those who are non-Knowers will get no further than the outer portals; those who Know are already within the inner sanctum.

184. Sophia entered the Void,
(The Void holds Matter;)
Sophia gave Nomos,
And he gave rise to Flesh.
Logos entered Matter,
(Matter holds the World;)
Faith turns it to Vision,
Vision transcends Sense.
Conscience entered Flesh,
(Flesh holds Man;)
Faith turns it to Agape,
Agape transcends Self.
Gnosis entered Men,
(Man holds the Gnostic;)
Gnosis will become the One.
The One transcends All.

185. The One willed Sophia.
Her descent produced Matter.
Her will made Nomos.
Nomos endowed some Matter with Sense.
Sense made Flesh; Flesh made Self.
Sophia's return to the One produced Logos,
And Logos the World.
Logos developed Sense into Conscience.
It raised Man from the beasts.
Those who join Sophia in her journey
In an act of Faith
Turn Logos into Vision,
And Conscience into Agape.

186. The Fullness, not matter, is widely scattered,
Detained in the world, not sent.
Some minds know beyond their self,
See forces at work in their flesh.
These knowing ones seek communion
To re-unite the All, their source.

187. O truly, you are blessed among the blessed,
If you have seen and heard and understood!

188. Our world was made by Ialdabaoth.
We name the parts
With the tongues he gave us.
His is the Word.
And through it the Truth is debased.

189. Though there is more than one path
The aim and end of all true Life
Is to transcend that illusion
Which we call the "self".
(The Way is not
To give up one's own "self"
For another "self".)

190. The religions follow false paths.
The light needs no refraction
To show its glory.
But the benighted can not see it,
Because their eyes have closed
In the darkness. And yet
In those whose eyes are pierced by the light
The flame already flickering grows.
The psychic also may become a means
For the Light to shine:
When his choice transcends nature,
Something may be saved for rebirth
Along the path to the One.

191. We must go on
To what has no beginning
And has no end.
We are heirs to what is eternal,
And trustees of a deathless prize.

D. PROSE

From Gnosis

Christian Gnostics do not entertain any idea of "progress". A Spiritual Principle is journeying through time and matter without its destiny necessarily being intertwined with them. In this way, we pre-empt the disillusion which we are heirs-to. This Spiritual Principle, which we Gnostics call "gnosis", seems at first sight to be identical to some suitably vague "Spirit" which is present in equal measure in all humankind. In this view, revelation is simply a matter of furnishing human beings with an authoritative statement of the truth accessible to reason, thereby eliciting an awareness of the Spiritual Principle within them as the necessary preamble to its needs and aspirations coming to expression in worship and philanthropic endeavour. But true Gnostics do not believe that the "gnosis" - an inherent "knowledge" or "insight" into the true nature of the reality which transcends the cosmos - is present in all human beings. By an accident of nature which Gnostics have been willing to express in one way or another in mythological terms, only a limited number of human beings share the "gnosis". In other words, Gnostics are sustained by an élitism wholly foreign to current religious sensibilities and unpalatable to modern apologists of "gnosticism". Because those who share the Knowledge did not obtain it by subscribing to a set of beliefs, it must be said that there is no such phenomenon as "gnosticism", to the extent that Truth is not an "ism" at all.

Hence, if a person can answer "Yes" to the question, "Were you with me before the beginning?" then they are "Gnostic" - by nature

rather than by belief. Those who are Gnostic are able to perceive in their own human life the cosmic drama of Sophia's repentance and the reciprocal descent of the Gnosis. As Gnostics, our quest is to find and gather all those in the physical body who can affirm this Truth. The Truth is, however, obscured by the demands of the Powers that emanate from Ialdabaoth, namely, Gender, Race, Class, Sexual Preference, Wealth, Family and Territory. Every religious system which has hitherto been known to humankind has been corrupted by these; only the Gnosis in its pure form transcends them. The Gnostic is therefore indifferent to the acquiescence or non-acquiescence of non-Gnostics. Indeed, the Truth may find itself entombed in the pyramid of a religious system, quietly but confidently awaiting its resurrection into the light of day.

The moral character of the demiurge is far inferior to that of his supposed creatures. And as for that Creation, with infinite power could we not have done a better job ourselves? Hemmed in as we are on all sides by the iron laws of Nature, it is the knowledge of this Truth in the heart of our hearts which will set us free – and the conviction that we belong to something that transcends all of this. Such is our consolation.

* * *

From the Introduction to A Commentary on Mark's Gospel

The real betrayer of Jesus was Peter.

Jesus was a Jewish reformer, the logical outcome of whose teachings found expression in the teachings of Gnostics which were suppressed by the “apostolic” heirs of Peter. Peter’s prime interest was power – the power that derived from being the principal follower of the Messiah and one of the twelve leaders of a re-constituted Israel. Unfortunately for Peter’s ambitions, Jesus himself never claimed to be the Messiah. And to make matters worse, Peter’s efforts to promote Jesus as the Messiah only resulted in Jesus’s ignominious death. Peter and his henchmen James and John therefore had to fabricate certain incidents to legitimise their claims: the Raising of Jairus’s Daughter, the Transfiguration, the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden and, above all, the Resurrection. By such stories, attested by three male witnesses, they were able to perpetrate the fiction of a man who had power over death, whose divine authority was legitimised by Moses and Elijah, whose suffering and death was part of God’s plan, and who was vindicated by being raised from death. The story of the betrayal by Judas (ie. Thomas) and the tales of the chastening of “doubting” Thomas (ie. Judas) were invented as a polemic against those disciples of the party of Judas the Twin (Greek “Didymos”, Aramaic “Thomas”) who dissented from Peter’s lies and misrepresentations.

What was Jesus’s real mission? His aim was to gather the true Israel. The True Israelites were those who, whatever their material circumstances, had existed as the Chosen in the mind of God since before the beginning of time. Wealth was no indicator of righteousness; neither was power.

Ritual purity was no guarantee of salvation, or good works such as fasting and sacrifice. To the true God spoken of by Jesus they counted as nothing. The focus of this newly-gathered Israel was to be the Herodian Temple, "cleansed" by Jesus and his followers in preparation for the Jubilee of the 49th (7 X 7) anniversary of its founding. It was this "messianic" action - the making ready of the outer courts for those apparently "cursed" with uncleanness by Yahweh - which ultimately sealed his fate with the Jewish establishment. But what of Jesus's suffering - what is its true meaning?

Jesus's own sufferings were meaningless except insofar as they showed forth the meaninglessness of suffering in this world - for is not true suffering by definition pain without meaning? If you are in pain and you don't know why, you suffer. If, on the other hand, there is a purpose to your pain, then the only issue is endurance. The one who cannot endure meaningful pain is a coward. The one who can endure it is brave. The one who endures pain himself in order to reduce the pain of others is a hero. Only a fool, however, would endure meaningless pain if it could be avoided. One who is God, or is privy to the mind of God, must know the meaning (as distinct from the scientific cause) of everything. He should also not be a fool. He therefore willingly embraces pain that has meaning while avoiding suffering. He is brave if the pain is great; he is a hero if his pain benefits others; but he is a fool if he wills suffering on himself. If the God-Man venerated by the Petrine Church suffered willingly, he is a fool - and God is a fool. If he heroically endures pain, he is great, but does not

suffer. The Christ of the “apostles” can not suffer; in telling his tale, therefore, it is necessary to multiply the pains he endures: by such sorrows is his heroism augmented – a heroism befitting a king. But is it possible to ascribe another kind of heroism to Jesus, a heroism that entails *genuine* suffering? When confronted by the meaningless pain of others we make choices as to how we react to it. If we choose not to ignore it we may ascribe a meaning to it in order to alleviate our own anguish in the face of another’s pain. One sure way of doing this is to see another’s pain as self-inflicted. The meaning of their pain is that they earned it; one way or another, by karma or by retribution, they brought it upon themselves. This “meaning” alleviates our pain in beholding suffering, even as it adds to the pain of those who suffer. Who can accept that they have deserved their pain? The sense of a lack of justice only adds to meaningless pain, to suffering. But the one who cares about the suffering of others – and why should he, unless he is a real hero? – empathises with meaningless pain. He rejects any “meaning” which denigrates the sufferer. He does what he can to reduce or palliate their meaningless pain. But in so doing – and this augments his heroism – he increases his own pain, his anguish in the face of suffering, by undermining the meaning which reduces his own suffering. Jesus took this stance, which needed to be expressed within the terms of his Judaism as an end to retribution, a denial of messianic expectation, and a new sacrifice prior to a destination-less exodus.

Engagement with the suffering of others without indulging in self-palliative interpretation of it,

thereby bringing empathic suffering upon oneself, is a truly altruistic and selfless stance. (The ultimate test of its altruism is whether the person in solidarity with the suffering can also dis-engage when this is what is required to benefit the object of their concern. The person who is not altruistic will often refuse to disengage because it does not serve their hidden motive.) By declaring this to be the root of morality, expressed in the key word “agape” (“love”) and placing it firmly in a religious framework, Jesus and his prophetic forbears are more than suggesting that the path to fulfilment is trod only through the abandonment of self by immersion in the plight of the helpless. Morality is in fact the means by which the self is transcended, and it is at this point that the messages of Jesus and Gautama converge.

Within the terms of his contemporary Judaism, the stance adopted by the Galilean rabbi required three theological innovations which, if allowed to go unchallenged, would have destroyed the foundations of the religion whatever its sectarian manifestation, whether Pharisaic, Sadducaic or Essene. The first was to sever the connection between pain and sin by declaring a jubilee of divine forgiveness. I believe that the jubilee announced by Jesus was unconditional. (The seven-times-seventh anniversary of the foundation of Herod’s Temple probably provided the justification for this.) The condition of a required “repentance” was developed by the Petrine faction after Jesus’s death – after all, who is inclined to repent? And why? Presumably the inclination and inspiration to do so is dependent on the unfathomable grace of Jehovah. The jubilee would in fact have

acknowledged that absolution of a debtor is not dependent on the debtor's worthiness of absolution.

But if God forgives unconditionally, why is there pain in the world? - surely not because God is tardy, incompetent or sadistic in not lifting the sentence of a reprieved felon? If God is not to be decried, then the logical inference is that there is no inevitable cause-effect relationship between sin and pain; or, if there is, God - being all-powerful - can suspend it at will. A true God need not be a slave to his own justice. But if the unfortunate are not blameworthy, neither are the fortunate worthy of praise - a proposition intolerable to the Jewish orthodoxy of Jesus's day.

Of course, only a person who had God's very own authority in its fullness could declare such a jubilee - such as the Messiah. I do not believe that Jesus claimed such authority, or indeed that he claimed to be the Messiah (except in the imaginings of the Petrine faction). There is no record of such a claim in the Petrine Gospels apart from the suspect story of Peter's declaration at Caesarea Philippi (after the equally suspect story of the Transfiguration), and Jesus nowhere uses the title of himself and his mission. This is because Jesus was not concerned with the issue of authority. He was driven to declare a jubilee as the theological expression of his over-riding sense of solidarity with the suffering - those supposedly cursed by God, and therefore excluded from the community by their inability to fulfil the obligations of the ritual law.

So, if Jesus's pains were embraced deliberately as part of a divine plan can it be said that the Messiah proclaimed by Peter really suffered? Rather, just as the Israelites slaughtered their new-born livestock before leaving Egypt and following Moses into the desert, so the true followers of Jesus abandoned the Messianic dream that died with the death of Jesus. This is the true meaning of the *pascha* effected by the death of Jesus of Nazareth. If Jesus colluded with this "sacrifice" - and we have no way of knowing whether he did or not - then the priest who offered it was not Jesus himself, but Judas.

The essential message of the Nazarene was corrupted by his disciples, and in particular by those who called themselves "apostles"; and above all by Peter, James and John. Their assertion, motivated by a desire for power, that Jesus was the Jewish "Messiah" sealed his fate (which they blamed on Judas Iscariot), led to the intrusion of the miraculous, and created the entity known as "The Holy Spirit". These in turn have led to the creation of a "church" which has all the vices of the institutional Judaism which Jesus set out to reform by his words and actions. Now that Judaism and Christianity are drenched in the blood of the innocent they can be seen for what they are. The time has come for those who share with Jesus the nature of the Gnosis to declare the Truth in its pristine purity.

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From The Gnostic Argument

The bringing-into-being of the material universe has been a process of centrifugal departure from

the ultimate reality to levels where consciousness is increasingly attenuated. There is, nevertheless, a definite gulf between the realm of consciousness and that of inert, unconscious matter, which is not the result of any providential "creation". When a conscious (or "proprioceptive") element is introduced into matter a futile dialectic is initiated between will and matter, which is sinister to the extent it subverts pure consciousness's contemplation of itself.

Consciousness, although ultimately its higher source, is not proprioception. Proprioception is a process, developed by the evolutionary process, with an end in mind: to sustain a material subject by monitoring its surroundings and making changes compatible with the survival of its own perceived integrity. Its motive force is will. The will's subject dreams of its successful domination of its environment. "God" is self-interest in its most successful form imaginable - "success" being defined by longevity and domination. He is immortal and omnipotent, and promises power and eternal life to his worshipers. He is essentially the will to power.

In the human sphere, intuition of pure "divine" consciousness may reside in the mind of man, but is always co-mingled and confused with, and corrupted by "intelligence." Intuition is an awareness which, as an aspect of consciousness, is an end in itself; intelligence is a proprioceptive mental faculty which, although divine in origin, is usually directed towards matter and subject to the direction of carnal will. If intelligence is to be directed or re-directed towards true consciousness,

there must first be a true perception. This perception is solely possessed by the spiritual man. Intimation of the spiritual realm is innate in those who share the spiritual nature.

The bringing-forth of order within the realm of matter is approved of by Intuition. It is this approval which enables repentance to come about. When the impulse towards order-in-matter re-directs itself towards true consciousness (the Fullness, or "Pleroma") then order can be re-oriented to the transcendence of matter. But while the impulse to order is genuinely divine, the impulse to worship order as an end in itself is not. It is rather a form of idolatry prevalent throughout religion.

Because Intuition cannot be denied or negated even as idolatry is being practised, the true end of intelligence is perceived deep within the heart. Because it cannot be denied, it expresses itself in human aesthetic activity. It is as a result of this process that Beauty may be found within the material world.

History is essentially Will seeking to express itself through matter in time; repentance and re-ascent must take the form of a rejection of these carnal elements. The rejection itself is not carnal or temporal – that is, is not an act or series of acts in time – since asceticism can simply be another manifestation of the will to power. It is ultimately a matter of knowledge or awareness of the Vast Active Living Intelligence System (VALIS).

The pneumatic, imprisoned in matter, are not an "elect". In "election", a God personally chooses who is to be saved on the basis of criteria which are inaccessible to both the elect and to the damned. If that God is supposedly the fount of all justice then this is a flagrant and self-contradictory abuse of his status, and the outrage felt by the creature makes him morally superior to his Creator. The wrong is only compounded by ascribing blame to an ancestor who was an individual, morally free agent independent of his descendants. In fact, there is no chosen "elect". "The Spiritual" are what they have been and always will be without beginning and without end. Their essential nature is not something created from no-thing, but rather an emanation from the Ultimate, the Valis, which they must re-appropriate by anamnesis. Their physical prison has enclosed them by a primordial accident.

The gulf between the Carnal, the creations of the demiurge, and the Spiritual, emanations from the Ultimate One, is explicable. The existence of a middle order of humankind, so verifiable in the persons who, spiritually speaking, aspire to so much in organised religion in all its various manifestations, and yet so consistently contradict their declared ideals, is not so easy to explain

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The Demiurge believed himself to be supreme. In order to enlighten him (and to simultaneously chastise him) the Pleroma had to reveal the Spiritual to the Material, thereby causing some of the latter to be ensnared and temporarily abandoned by the return of the Immaculate to the Fullness. This was how "The Spiritual" came to be

in the world. But the action of a Being of Spirit, in its desire to enlighten, created something hybrid, both Carnal and Spiritual, a reflection of Mind, just as the Demiurge was a reflection of Desire. The Spiritual and the Psychic therefore emanate from the same source, but are of a different order.

Because revelation of the Spiritual was a moral act, the Psychic have a moral element which raises them above mere Desire. They are at their best when the moral element is combined with Ialdabaoth's impulse to order and shape; we see them exemplified in reforming saints: holy men and women and other "spiritual" leaders. They are, nevertheless, not of the same order as the Spiritual, who are a seed which grows secretly.

"The Spiritual" can not be identified by any physical, mental or moral characteristics. They cannot therefore form any identifiable group in human society. Even faith, whether or not it is expressed in a publicly observable ritual, can not admit them to "The Company of The Spiritual" in a sense comparable to "The Company of The Faithful". The Spiritual are perhaps from time to time able to recognise the traits which they have identified in themselves, but this is no guarantee that what they have perceived is a decisive indication: the more authentic the trait, the less perceptible it is to the senses. Our senses and perceptions are in any case susceptible to deception by ourselves and others; and, furthermore, "The Psychic" will share some of the spiritual characteristics of the Spiritual.

Even if the Spiritual were able to form themselves into some kind of caucus, they could lay no claim upon the service of others - nor, indeed, is there anything they would desire from them in this world. "Church" is therefore not possible. Because the material world is irredeemable, there is no point in forming an organisation which promotes the "cause" of faith in redemption. And because God does not act in the world as Saviour, there can be no scripture, no ritual sacrifice, and no priesthood. The only sacrifice is that of the Spiritual, who suffer in their own flesh the consequences of their knowledge of the designs of the Powers and therefore the hostility of the Powers towards them. There is no providence, no prayer, no priesthood, and no "God".

Any Gnostics who organise themselves into a "Church" will fall prey to those corruptions which are the inevitable result of admitting people who see entry either as a means of "improving" their material situation, or as a way of seeking to extend material "blessings" into eternity, or as a way of seeking sanction for, or endorsement of, their own superiority, priority or "specialness". These are the ports of entry for the doctrinal vices of an organised Church. Firstly, because everyone feels the need to regard themselves as "special", the idea of providence creeps in. The Spiritual, it is believed, are chosen from among the rest as part of God's grand design. This elect have not been trapped in the world as a result of accident or folly: they have been placed there for a purpose. In short, they are God's chosen instrument in the salvation of the world - or, even more audaciously, they are themselves the saving God. But there is no

providence. The Spiritual are trapped and are returning through the aeons by paths of liberation which are difficult and known only by themselves, even if liberation is assured. Perhaps the doctrine of providence is the authentic expression of the truth about the Psychic (as distinct from the Spiritual) order. The revelation of the Spiritual order was indeed an act of will on the part of a being higher than the one called "God". The act of volition brought into being those called "Psychic" for the benefit of the "Carnal", but since the "Carnal" are not equipped for enlightenment the sacrifice of the Psychic on the altar of matter is in vain.

Morality is the preserve of the Psychic. (For the Carnal, morality is only a fear of an external and punishing authority which keeps their lusts in check.) When the Pleroma wished to reveal the realm of the Spirit to the Demiurge, it brought into being a higher sentiment. The Carnal seek to bring order into matter, and Ialdabaoth is a principle of order, but this is simply an expression of a will to power. It is only when this purely carnal order-in-matter is measured over against the non-material realm that morality is born. If there is a simple knowledge that there is a spiritual realm present, and there is an impulse towards it, then the material realm will be measured over against the spiritual realm by those who experience the impulse. This breeds a profound dissatisfaction with things as they are in the material sphere. It is this dissatisfaction which engenders morality and is codified by the Psychic into Law. The Psychic then extend its provisions to the Carnal by promoting sanctions, real or imagined.

"Conscience" is the active manifestation in moral decision-making of the innate spiritual nature of some human beings. The spiritual nature of some human beings is identical with, and participates in, the nature of a Spirit which transcends the material universe; "Conscience" is therefore attuned to moral principles which transcend behaviour necessary to material well-being. It is the voice of an "alter ego" emanating from a differently-constituted identity. As the voice of our spiritual nature, it may conflict with the demands of our carnal nature. It is seen to be capable of passing judgment on all notions of deity and all theories of the relationship between a creator and the created order.

Since "systems" are subject to the same judgment as deities, a systematic theology, or an appeal to a historical tradition or divinely-sanctioned authority is out of the question. Any such attempt will make a poor imitation of Truth. Our aim should not be to establish systems. Our aim should be to call forth those who share the knowledge. This summoning of an invisible community of insight, this "thing called forth" (*ecclesia*), is the nearest we dare approach to forming a Church without compromising the Truth.

Pneumatic man is, by dint of his physical nature, drawn into the preoccupations of carnal man. But because he shares in higher consciousness he remains aloof from his power-games. He sees the material organism in context, and appreciates how its behaviour is determined by matter and will. He is therefore detached from "this world", and perceives its dictates as stemming from a lower order of reality. For him true consciousness is a

burden to bear: there is no sense of moral superiority to motivate; there is no covenant with a personal god to inspire; and there is no divine providence to comfort. Consciousness is an end in itself. Its possessor is a stranger and alien in the world. He bears no message which will enable his hearers to be reconciled to the world. There is comfort, nevertheless, for the Spiritual in recognising the cause of his exile, and the nature of his destination. The Gnostic sage brings news of home for his fellow-travellers.

The Spiritual may very rarely manifest itself in history, although the re-telling of it is inevitably corrupted by worldly considerations. For example, the Passover in around 1500 B.C.E. involved the slaughter of livestock by the Hebrews - a slave population in thrall to the Egyptians - before leaving the country *en masse*. These animals depended on permanent pasturage; their slaughter was part of a lightening of loads before leaving a land of settled agriculture in the Nile basin and entering the arid wilderness to the east, where life is nomadic and "on the edge", and the comforts - and thraldoms - of an already ancient civilisation did not then pertain. Such was the result of a genuinely spiritual impulse.

However, when the story was told much later in a different setting, itself one of settled agriculture, the culling and ritual slaughter of spring lambs in the context of the Passover story became interpreted as a sacrificial substitution for firstborn male children, reflecting the priorities of the "new" society: the survival of the new generation, and particular the children who were the product of youthful vigour:

the firstborn. The sacrificial cultus needed a priesthood (absent at the original Passover) who slaughtered the spring lambs which could not be supported by existing pasturage in a purpose-built cultic location: the Temple.

By then another understanding common amongst all ancient cultures came into play: expiation of sin before an angry god by the offering of the life-blood of animals slaughtered for food. Thus, in the *pesach* story the blood of the sacrificed animal smeared over the doors of the households of the chosen people warded off a destroying angel; that is, the blood was offered to appease a fierce deity.

Both of these concepts superimposed over the original Passover story – the idea of a god who, unappeased, will demand the human sacrifice of the first-born child (as in the story of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac), and a god who may lose his temper if not placated by the blood of sacrifice – present a primitive notion of what the supreme deity is like: concepts unworthy of the true God. In other words, the original idea of renunciation towards freedom enshrined in the original Passover ritual has been corrupted by the concept of a god who doles out rewards – such as the survival of descendants – and punishments for those who do not submit to an unquestioning obedience.

In this corrupted religion which developed after the success of the genocidal war against the Canaanites, the “promised land” and its agricultural prosperity were seen by the writers of the Jewish scriptures as a reward for obedience to a supposed covenant between the “chosen” people

and their savage god. This covenant incorporated ideas of ritual uncleanness. By the time of Jesus, any condition which rendered the victim unclean was seen a curse by Jehovah for past sin (either by themselves or their forebears) along the lines of the theology of divine rewards and punishments inherent in the Jewish scriptures. Indeed, the concept of uncleanness linked to punishment justified the genocide of the Canaanites: their idolatry had made them “unclean”, as had certain customs (such as, for example, the shaving of the temples) not practised by the invading Hebrews. Any action which involved fraternisation with the Canaanites rendered the perpetrator “unclean”. In this scheme of things, well-established in orthodox Judaism by the time of Jesus, individuals prospered because their virtue was being rewarded by god, and individuals afflicted by an uncleanness such as leprosy were being punished for their or their family's vices.

In due course, after the occupation of Canaan, the divinely appointed king David and his descendants became the guarantor of the sacrificial cultus at a central cultic location on Mount Moriah (supposedly the site of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac) in Jerusalem. The covenant then became established with the Davidic king as a representative of the people. In this capacity, the king himself could be rewarded or punished as a substitute for the people. Hence, after the disaster of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, the ideas of punishment of the king and the hope of expiation by him were expressed in the poetic passages in *Isaiah* describing a “suffering servant” whose sufferings could be the propitiation of the

sins of Israel which had led to the disaster. At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees clearly believed that the voluntary suffering of the righteous (such as themselves) could contribute to the redemption of the nation. Thus the practice of fasting became an important replacement for the festal meals which took place in the Herodian Temple, itself unclean as was within the shadow of the Gentile Antonia fortress, and its Holy of Holies overlooked by the palace of the Idumaean Herod.

Thus, to point to the true God, a prophet must reject – and to re-affirm the primitive god, the guarantor of the Judaic race and culture, good Jews must incorporate – law, covenant, messiah-king, temple, substitutionary and expiatory sacrifices (with their priesthood and temples) and ritual cleansing. For the Petrine party (led by Peter, John and James) Jesus delivers or is all of these, and the “New Testament” was written by the Petrine party. (And we see in those documents a theology which is not fully developed: the idea of the risen body of Jesus as the new Temple. Not enough time had passed between the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the writing of the Christian scriptures for it to develop. Nevertheless, as a nascent theology it required the story of a physical resurrection of Jesus.) The prophet Jesus rejected all of these cultic trappings and, before his death, re-affirmed the original meaning of the Passover: dependence on the true God in a place (physical or spiritual) away from carnal preoccupations.

Jesus, in his healing acts, severed the perceived connection between physical circumstances and divine rewards and punishments. So, who, then,

are the “blessed”? According to Jesus, only God knows. The elect are like seed which is scattered on different soils (the parable being misinterpreted by the Gospel-writers). God will gather his own to himself in due course of time. But according to the Petrines Jesus did not declare ritual uncleanness as being of no account. They depicted a Messiah who cured by his divine power the unclean afflictions caused by sin, or expelled demons of uncleanness, thus demonstrating his alleged power over nature and supernature. (Although a vestige of the true activity of Jesus in declaring the unclean as accepted by God and not afflicted by the consequences of sin is preserved in the picture of “faithful” people as the victims of a random demonic possession.) They took over the cleansing ritual of John the Baptist, and turned it also into a ritual re-enactment on the part of the believer of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The concept of a holy spirit was developed as a means of retaining an apostolic monopoly over the supposed supernatural power of Jesus.

The ritual uncleanness of the Temple itself, and its destruction by the Romans, meant that the Petrines could claim that the death of Jesus was the fulfillment of the atonement sacrifice of *Yom Kippur*. This claim could not be applied so effectively to the Passover sacrifice, since the celebration of this took place in the home – although Christians could appropriate the slaughter of the paschal lamb in the Temple. Because of this, the idea of the atoning death of Jesus took on a greater significance, allowing Jewish Christians like Peter to theologise the national disaster that had overtaken them.

The idea of substitution in both the atonement and Passover sacrifices – for Israel in the former, for the first-born of the Israelites in the latter – had to be extended to all humanity and not just the Jews as the Petrines faced rejection in the synagogues and increased acceptance by Gentiles. (The only way Gentiles could become part of the Jewish elect was by circumcision, but this did not make them literal sons of Abraham.) Hence, in later Petrine theology, the sin of Adam (ie. all men in the person of their common ancestor) was atoned-for by the death of a second Adam: Jesus. This theology did raise the difficulty of “inherited” sin. The suggestion by Augustine of Hippo was that this was passed on by the concupiscence inherent in the reproductive act. But it was dealt by the cleansing ritual of baptism. What was not dealt with was the alleged punishment for sin – affliction which the “sinner” did not appear to bring down upon themselves, such as birth defects – which continued to pertain after baptism. The lifting of the Petrine god’s “punishments” have to be deferred to the arrival of a new heaven and a new earth. In the same way the reward of the martyrs to the “true faith” had to be similarly deferred, as depicted in the Apocalypse of John the Divine. In this theology, the alleged supernatural miracles of Jesus were the foretaste of this new deal at the end of the era of sin.

But once we accept that the miracles of Jesus were invented by the Petrines, then Jesus may be seen as declaring that worldly afflictions are not a punishment for sin. But what about the sin of Adam and its consequent curse as depicted in the “Old Testament”? The fact that the myth had gained wide currency because of the Hellenistic

Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures, the so-called “Septuagint”, put pressure on the Gnostics, the true spiritual heirs of Jesus, to present their own interpretation. In this alternative exegesis, Adam rebels against the primitive demiurge Jehovah (“Ialdabaoth”) prompted by the “life” (Zoe/Eve) within him. But Eve herself is also subject to the curse of carnality: she is raped by Ialdabaoth, and the cult of death begins. The blood-sacrifices of her son Abel are favoured by Jehovah, while her other offspring by Ialdabaoth, Cain, becomes a murderer. Nevertheless, “life” (that is, the “eternal life” of Gnosis) is carried on by the true offspring of Adam and Eve: Seth. This striving towards an alternative interpretation of an essentially alien scripture, thrust upon Gnostics by the prevalence of the Septuagint, can been seen in the documents of Nag Hammadi – a late and incomplete attempt made before the true religion was forcibly overwhelmed by “orthodoxy”, and holy war was perpetrated by the Petrines, the heirs of the Pharisees.

Jesus, then, was a Jewish reformer, the logical outcome of whose teachings found expression in the Gnostic teachings which were suppressed by the “apostolic” revisionists. The real betrayer of Jesus was Peter. Peter’s prime interest was power – the power that derived from being the principal follower of the Messiah and one of the twelve leaders of a re-constituted Israel. Unfortunately for Peter’s ambitions, Jesus himself never claimed to be the Messiah. And to make matters worse, Peter’s efforts to promote Jesus as the Messiah only resulted in Jesus’s ignominious death. Peter and his accomplices James and John therefore had to fabricate certain incidents to legitimise their claims:

the Raising of Jairus's Daughter, the Transfiguration, the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden and, above all, the Resurrection. By such stories, attested by three male witnesses, they were able to perpetrate the fiction of a man who had power over death, whose divine authority was legitimised by Moses and Elijah, whose suffering and death was part of God's plan, and who was vindicated by being raised from death. The story of the betrayal by Judas (ie. Thomas) and the tales of the chastening of "doubting" Thomas (ie. Judas) were invented as a polemic against those disciples of the party of Judas the Twin (Greek "Didymos", Aramaic "Thomas") who dissented from Peter's lies and misrepresentations.

What was Jesus's real mission? His aim was to gather the true Israel. The True Israelites were those who, whatever their material circumstances, had existed as the Chosen in the mind of the true God since before the beginning of time. Wealth was no indicator of righteousness; neither was power. Ritual purity was no guarantee of salvation, or good works such as fasting and sacrifice. To the true God spoken of by Jesus they counted as nothing. The focus of this newly-gathered Israel was to be the Herodian Temple, "cleansed" by Jesus and his followers in preparation for the Jubilee of the 49th (ie. the 7 X 7th) anniversary of its founding. It was this "messianic" action - the making ready of the outer courts for those apparently "cursed" with uncleanness by Yahweh - which ultimately sealed his fate with the Jewish establishment.

But what of Jesus's suffering – what is its true meaning? Jesus's own sufferings were meaningless except insofar as they showed forth the meaninglessness of suffering in this world – for is not true suffering by definition pain without meaning? If you are in pain and you don't know why, you suffer. If, on the other hand, there is a purpose to your pain, then the only issue is endurance. The one who cannot endure meaningful pain is a coward. The one who can endure it is brave. The one who endures pain himself in order to reduce the pain of others is a hero. Only a fool, however, would endure meaningless pain if it could be avoided. One who is God, or is privy to the mind of God, must know the meaning (as distinct from the scientific cause) of everything. He should also not be a fool. He therefore willingly embraces pain that has meaning while avoiding suffering. He is brave if the pain is great; he is a hero if his pain benefits others; but he is a fool if he wills suffering on himself. If the God-Man venerated by the Petrine Church suffered willingly, he is a fool – and God is a fool. If he heroically endures pain, he is great, but does not suffer. The Christ of the "apostles" can not suffer; in telling his tale, therefore, it is necessary to multiply the pains he endures: by such sorrows is his heroism augmented – a heroism befitting a king.

But is it possible to ascribe another kind of heroism to Jesus, a heroism that entails *genuine* suffering? When confronted by the meaningless pain of others we make choices as to how we react to it. If we choose not to ignore it we may ascribe a meaning to it in order to alleviate our own anguish in the face of another's pain. One sure way of doing this is to

see another's pain as self-inflicted. The meaning of their pain is that they earned it; one way or another, by karma or by retribution, they brought it upon themselves. This "meaning" alleviates our pain in beholding suffering, even as it adds to the pain of those who suffer. Who can accept that they have deserved their pain? The sense of a lack of justice only adds to meaningless pain, to suffering. But the one who cares about the suffering of others - and why should he, unless he is a real hero? - empathises with meaningless pain. He rejects any "meaning" which denigrates the sufferer. He does what he can to reduce or palliate their meaningless pain. But in so doing - and this augments his heroism - he increases his own pain, his anguish in the face of suffering, by undermining the meaning which would reduce his own suffering. Jesus took this stance, which needed to be expressed within the terms of his Judaism as an end to retribution, a denial of messianic expectation, and a new sacrifice prior to a destination-less exodus.

Engagement with the suffering of others without indulging in self-palliative interpretation of it, thereby bringing empathic suffering upon oneself, is a truly altruistic and selfless stance. (The ultimate test of its altruism is whether the person in solidarity with the suffering can also dis-engage when this is what is required to benefit the object of their concern. The person who is not altruistic will often refuse to disengage because it does not serve their hidden motive.) By declaring this to be the root of morality, expressed in the key word "agape" ("love") and placing it firmly in a religious framework, Jesus and his prophetic forbears are more than suggesting that the path to fulfilment is

trod only through the abandonment of self by immersion in the plight of the helpless. Morality is in fact the means by which the self is transcended, and it is at this point that the messages of Jesus and Gautama converge.

Within the terms of his contemporary Judaism, the stance adopted by the Galilean rabbi required three theological innovations which, if allowed to go unchallenged, would have destroyed the foundations of the religion whatever its sectarian manifestation, whether Pharisaic, Sadducaic or Essene. The first was to sever the connection between pain and sin by declaring a jubilee of divine forgiveness. The jubilee announced by Jesus was unconditional. (The seven-times-seventh anniversary of the foundation of Herod's Temple probably provided the justification for this.) The condition of a required "repentance" was developed by the Petrine faction after Jesus's death - after all, who is inclined to repent? And why? Presumably the inclination and inspiration to do so is dependent on the unfathomable grace of Jehovah. The jubilee would in fact have acknowledged that absolution of a debtor is not dependent on the debtor's worthiness of absolution.

But if God forgives unconditionally, why is there pain in the world? - surely not because God is tardy, incompetent or sadistic in not lifting the sentence of a reprieved felon? If God is not to be decried, then the logical inference is that there is no inevitable cause-effect relationship between sin and pain; or, if there is, God - being all-powerful - can suspend it at will. A true God need not be a slave to

his own justice. But if the unfortunate are not blameworthy, neither are the fortunate worthy of praise – a proposition intolerable to the Jewish orthodoxy of Jesus’s day.

Of course, only a person who had God’s very own authority in its fullness could declare such a jubilee – such as the Messiah. Jesus did not claim such authority, and neither did he claim to be the Messiah (except in the imaginings of the Petrine faction). There is no record of such a claim in the Petrine Gospels apart from the suspect story of Peter’s declaration at Caesarea Philippi (after the equally suspect story of the Transfiguration), and Jesus nowhere uses the title of himself and his mission. This is because Jesus was not concerned with the issue of authority. He was driven to declare a jubilee as the theological expression of his over-riding sense of solidarity with the suffering – those supposedly cursed by God, and therefore excluded from the community by their inability to fulfil the obligations of the ritual law.

So, if Jesus’s pains were embraced deliberately as part of a divine plan can it be said that the Messiah proclaimed by Peter really suffered? Rather, just as the Israelites slaughtered their new-born livestock before leaving Egypt and following Moses into the desert, so the true followers of Jesus abandoned the Messianic dream that died with the death of Jesus. This is the true meaning of the *pascha* effected by the death of Jesus of Nazareth. If Jesus colluded with this “sacrifice” – and we have no way of knowing whether he did or not – then the priest who offered it was not Jesus himself, but Judas.

The essential message of the Nazarene was corrupted by his disciples, and in particular by those who called themselves "apostles"; and above all by Peter, James and John. Their assertion, motivated by a desire for power, that Jesus was the Jewish "Messiah" sealed his fate (which they blamed on Judas Iscariot), led to the intrusion of the miraculous, and created the entity known as "The Holy Spirit". These in turn have led to the creation of a "church" which has all the vices of the institutional Judaism which Jesus set out to reform by his words and actions. Now that Judaism and Christianity are drenched in the blood of the innocent they can be seen for what they are. The time has come for those who share with Jesus the nature of the Gnosis to declare the Truth in its pristine purity

Gnostics do not entertain any idea of "progress". Instead, a spiritual principle is journeying through time and matter without its destiny necessarily being intertwined with them. In this way, we preempt disillusion. This Spiritual Principle, which Gnostics call "Gnosis", seems at first sight to be identical to some suitably vague "Spirit" which is present in equal measure in all humankind. In this view, revelation is simply a matter of furnishing human beings with an authoritative statement of the truth accessible to reason, thereby eliciting an awareness of the Spiritual Principle within them as the necessary preamble to its needs and aspirations coming to expression in worship and philanthropic endeavour. But true Gnostics do not believe that the "gnosis" – an inherent "knowledge" or "insight" into the true nature of the reality which transcends

the cosmos – is present in all human beings. By an accident of supernature, only a limited number of human beings share the "gnosis". In other words, Gnostics are sustained by an elitism wholly foreign to current religious sensibilities and unpalatable to modern apologists of "gnosticism". Because those who share the Knowledge did not obtain it by subscribing to a set of beliefs, it must be said that there is no such phenomenon as "gnosticism", to the extent that Truth is not an "ism" at all.

Hence, if a person can answer "Yes" to the question, "Were you with me before the beginning?" then they are "Gnostic" – by nature rather than by belief. They have achieved anamnesis and are in contact with the Valis. Those who are Gnostic are able to perceive in their own human life the cosmic drama of Sophia's repentance and the reciprocal descent of the Gnosis. As Gnostics, our quest is to find and gather all those in the physical body who can affirm this Truth. The Truth is, however, obscured by the demands of the Powers that emanate from Ialdabaoth, namely, Gender, Race, Class, Sexual Preference, Wealth, Family and Territory. Every religious system which has hitherto been known to humankind has been corrupted by these; only the Gnosis in its pure form transcends them. The Gnostic is therefore indifferent to the acquiescence or non-acquiescence of non-Gnostics. Indeed, the Truth may find itself entombed in the pyramid of a religious system, quietly but confidently awaiting its resurrection into the light of day. Hemmed in as we are on all sides by the iron laws of Nature, it is the knowledge of this Truth in the heart of our hearts which will set us free – and the conviction

that we belong to something that transcends all of this. Such is our consolation.

* * *

From Rammohun Roy and "the Daystar of Approaching Morn"

Theologians and philosophers of religion who have reflected on the encounter between Christianity and other religions have observed that the challenges produced by the era of rapid colonial expansion has its analogies in the pluralism of the Roman empire amidst which Christianity was born. The Stoic and Alexandrian principle of the "logos spermatikos" ("the seminal word" was regarded by some as God's gift to the Greeks, and a form of divine revelation. It was possible in the light of this principle for Christians to quote the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, which spoke of the incarnate Word as "the true light which enlightens every man" (John 1:9), and interpret this as meaning that there were indeed various deposits of truth scattered around the various religions and philosophies of the world, needing only to be brought out, made manifest and fulfilled by a Christ who was "Christus Consummator". Until recently, scholars tended to assume that apostolic orthodoxy during the pre-Constantinian period was pestered by minor heterodox aberrations. The discovery of papyri at Nag Hammadi, only recently made available in English, shows the extent to which an "alternative" Christianity had developed before its exponents and their Scriptures were ruthlessly suppressed by the newly-established Church in the fourth century A.D.. Speculation – and that is all it can be, given the paucity of documentary evidence

- about the brand of religion exemplified by these writings is still in its infancy, and what I have to say begs many questions. But I proceed because the point is broader than a particular version of the history of ideas.

Christian Gnosticism (the accepted label for the "heresy" of which we speak) took as its basis the teaching of Jesus. The pressing question for Gnostics was: How could the important revelation embodied in his sayings be commended to a sophisticated cosmopolitan civilisation, often morally degenerate, but nevertheless heir to an advanced and patently admirable philosophical legacy - like the India of Rammohun's time? Rammohun thought that the fables which formed the basis of "orthodox" Christology would cut little ice with educated Hindus. For the Gnostics, the problem was the Old Testament. Part of the problem for Rammohun was the extent to which he should accommodate some of the "mythological" material embedded in the New Testament. Gnostics solved the problem by regarding such mythological material as provisional - as so much grist to the mill of truth. In other words, the truth embodied by the teaching of Jesus was not dependent on any symbolic or mythological system - even that of the Torah or of the Messianic *kerygma* of the Petrine circle of apostles. Already, we have moved beyond the position of Mary Carpenter. The Christian Gnostics appeared to have an eschatology, but it was one of destruction rather than consummation. In other words, they did not entertain any idea of "progress". The cosmos was a closed and morally neutral system. (I do not believe that Gnosticism in its purest form regarded matter

as "evil". Moral dualism was an overlay.) The "spiritual principle" (for want of a more precise and universally acceptable phrase) was journeying through time and matter without necessarily seeking to express itself in and through these media. In this way, they pre-empted the disillusion which we are heirs to and anticipated that sometimes harsh realism which is and will be undoubtedly necessary for the solving of our ecological problems and which is so difficult to extrapolate from the Judaeo-Christian tradition encumbered with its central notion of Providence. Already, we have travelled beyond the position of Martineau.

It is at this point that I will leave many traditional Unitarians, who have perhaps begun to drag their feet during the last paragraph, far, far behind. The "spiritual principle" which I have mentioned, and which the Gnostics called "gnosis", seems at first sight to be identical to the "spirit" spoken of by Martineau. But Martineau, working within a framework which is essentially optimistic about human nature and the world, believes that this "spirit" is present in equal measure in all humankind. It is simply a matter of furnishing human beings with a reasonably - I use this adverb deliberately - authoritative statement of the truth to elicit an awareness of the spiritual principle within them as the necessary preamble to its needs and aspirations coming to expression in worship and philanthropic endeavour. This is the largely implicit assumption in Rammohun's programme of publishing "purified" Scripture from both the Hindu and Christian traditions. But the Gnostics did not believe that the "gnosis" - an inherent

"knowledge" or "insight" into the true nature of the reality which transcends the cosmos - was present in all human beings. By an accident of nature which Gnostics were willing to express in one way or another in mythological terms - including reworkings of the Adam and Eve myth in "Genesis" - only an unspecified number of human beings possessed the "gnosis". In other words, Gnostics were sustained by an élitism wholly foreign to the Unitarian tradition.

Or is it? While the Unitarians may have been reacting against Calvinistic élitism, which made the doctrine of the atonement even more morally repulsive, there is a overwhelming sense among these early Unitarians - among whom I include Rammohun - that history is on their side. Events have proved otherwise. But when I look back, I sense a deep affinity with the likes of Rammohun Roy and Mary Carpenter which transcends mere ideas or personality. The Gnostics would have had ways of explaining this affinity, and why events do not always seem to be on their side, and why the numbers of "enlightened" seem so small.

Most of the affinities we possess with fellow human beings seldom rise to the level of consciousness. They may be affinities of class, race, or culture, or temperament. More often than not, they are complex co-mixture. If self-interest forms the warp of society, these may be said to form the weft. They are deeply rooted in the instinctive life of the species, even if they are justified or explained in language which uses moral or spiritual terms. Circumstances may occasionally arise in which human minds are brought into contact with each

other through the medium of a common language without the benefit or hindrance of strong common affinities. The affinities may be prevented by geography, or, more usually, removed by time. Being the very foundation of human social life, they may be destroyed by death, even if personality or principle survives in written form. It is this latter phenomenon – the survival and manifestation of personality and/or principle when other affinities are not in evidence – which provides the real subject of this lecture.

I go back to Jesus of Nazareth. In terms of the usual affinities none of us have anything in common with this man. But his mind is to a limited extent accessible to us what is in what is preserved of his sayings in the gospels. What happens when we encounter a person in this way? One possibility is that we do not encounter them as a person at all. Literary remains become the object solely of scholarly attention, a source for the history of ideas. In this case, personality or principle can barely be said to have survived at all. This has not happened in the case of Jesus. In his case we have the classic example of the assimilation of remains to the service of a particular race, class or culture. Since these express themselves in myth, the remains of an individual may be "mythologised". This did happen in the case of Jesus. Even before his death it appears that his identity was being assimilated to that of the popular Jewish mythological figure of "the messiah". Since the myth is archetypal, it has endured, and taken the words of Jesus along with it. In these circumstances, I believe that "personality" becomes dependent on the particular form of the myth in any age.

Another possible outcome is that of *recognition*. Something in the mind of the person is not only encountered, but recognised, and recognised as something valuable, to be cherished. This is not to be confused with an affinity of temperament. When I read the words of Jesus, provided that I can filter out the mythological framework that the evangelists placed them in, I do not encounter personality. What I encounter is "principle", and this transcends the common affinities. There may be said to be an "affinity of principle".

The problem with Jesus of Nazareth as an example is that it is has become very difficult, if not impossible, to separate the man from the myth. And yet I believe that the notion of an "affinity of principle" is absolutely central to religion and what is of enduring value in it once the merely human and relative phenomena of class, race and culture have been filtered out. Indeed, if such a concept has any correspondence with an objective Truth, it may hold the key to all our futures insofar as it embodies the triumph of universal altruism over tribal interest, and higher reason over animal instinct.

Despite some of the uncertainties of the present age, there are still folk who cling to the notion that if we could strip Christianity of the accretions of the ages there is something in the message conveyed by Jesus of Nazareth which is authoritative. To such persons (and I include myself among them) to say that a person is Christ-like is the Ultimate compliment, and it is a compliment which I am inspired to pay to

Rammohun Roy. This is rather different to Mary Carpenter's position. For her, Rammohun is one who has "sat at the feet" of Jesus and has been well on the way to apprehending the authoritative and largely exclusive Divine Revelation represented by the Nazarene. What I am saying is that I see the same impulse at work – call it "divine" if you will – in the lives of both of these men. It is a phenomenon which we may witness in the lives of other men and women who we may call "great".

I still glory in the name of "Christian". This is because I admire Jesus of Nazareth. In some ways, I suppose my Christology is fairly conventional: I am drawn by sympathy to Jesus because he was a victim, and I rejoice that in spite of all the Truth embodied in his Word was vindicated. Where I part company with "Christendom" is in my belief that Jesus was as much a victim of the Apostles as of the Jewish establishment of the time. The urgent message of the Nazarene has been struggling to escape from the mythological shackles which Peter and his colleagues loaded it with ever since it was delivered. It has been the unique witness of Unitarians to assist in the deliverance of the Truth. But such is the nature of Truth that anyone who thinks they have found it have it fact lost it, and, as we shall see, our worthy forbears were no exception to this most mystifying of rules.

I admire the subject of this lecture not because he was a "Christian", either implicitly or explicitly, but because he was "Christ-like". He too was a victim to some extent of well-meaning associates who were driven by forces largely beyond their own comprehension to try and imprison their hero in a

mythological system to which they were sincerely committed. And, looking back, we see something break free, and we recognise that we have an affinity with it in our hearts, our minds, our souls, or wherever we choose to locate the inner sanctum of our being.

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From A Commentary on Mark's Gospel

CURE OF A MAN WITH A SKIN DISEASE.
MARK 1:40-45. "Be clean!" At a stroke, by word and by touch, Jesus declares the invalidity of the taboos which put outcasts beyond the pale of Holiness. But his compassion simultaneously destroys the Jewish explanation of personal catastrophe. A disease like leprosy was regarded as the just curse of God. To say the leper was "clean" would have caused scandal to the orthodox - even to Jesus's closest disciples. Perhaps this is why Mark or his source emphasises Jesus's instruction to meet the requirements of the ritual law. A more radical explanation would be that Jesus's attack on the taboo was beyond even the tolerance of Jesus's Jewish disciples, and his declaration of cleanliness was turned subsequently into a healing. But there is no evidence for this speculation beyond Mark's text and it is clearly an interpretation not supported by Mark himself. Jesus' apparent abrogation of the laws of uncleanness presented similar problems of interpretation with respect to other incidents. The emphasis throughout the story of the exorcism of "Mob", the lunatic (5:1-20) is on ritual pollution. The man lives in a cemetery, a place of uncleanness. When the spirits are cast out they go into a herd of pigs - an unclean animal of the kind you would

expect to find in Gentile - "unclean" - territory. But the situation is expressed by Mark in terms of spirits. Perhaps the Apostles, less radical than Jesus, accepted the notion of "uncleanness", but related it to a supernatural war against evil by developing the idea of "spirits of uncleanness". As in the case of the leper, Jesus' original action may have been a comment on the Jewish taboos involving "clean" and "unclean", but Mark's main concern is to show the supernatural power of Jesus against the forces of evil. The woman with the haemorrhage (5:25-34) almost certainly had a gynaecological condition which rendered her unclean. If this man was holy she should not have been touching him. That is why she was afraid when Jesus realised that he had been touched. Then much to her surprise, no doubt, she found that Jesus was forgiving, and did not seem to share these taboos about ritual cleanliness.

THE PARALYSED MAN. MARK 2:1-12. It is important to understand the basic assumption here: the sick man is paralysed as a result of God's judgement on his sins. The first thing, therefore, that Jesus says is, "Your sins are forgiven". (It is only to overcome the murmurs of disapproval that Jesus goes on to heal the man. Jesus leaves no doubt as to his divine power!) In the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus, a person's previous sins are of no account provided a person repents and seeks God's forgiveness. What a person suffers physically is not related to their individual sin. They deserve compassion rather than condemnation. But what for Jesus was primarily a restatement of the significance of individual misfortune becomes, for Mark, a demonstration of Jesus' divine power.

THE CALL OF LEVI. MARK 2:13-17. This shows the same pattern as the calling of the other disciples: Jesus sees somebody at their trade, and says, "You! Stop what you're doing and come and follow me!" But here there is a significant difference. Levi's trade is the disreputable, almost criminal trade of tax-collecting. Not only were tax-collectors ritually unclean, because they mixed with the hated foreigner, they were "crooks": corruption was built into the Roman system. In countries that have fallen prey to corruption, you have to give a "back-hander" to the official concerned if you want anything done, otherwise he will not do his job. That was how the tax-system worked officially under the Roman authorities. It was assumed that the tax-collector would collect more than was required in tax and keep it. He would extract whatever he thought he could get away with. And the Romans would provide the military force to back up his demands no questions asked, as long as they got their taxes. If you were living in a country where a hated foreigner had invaded and you had some of your own people collaborating with the invader, that would be bad enough; but when those collaborators actually came and started soaking you for money upon threat of foreign soldiers coming round and assaulting you or throwing you in jail, then you can imagine how people felt about these people. This is certainly the calling of a disciple with a difference. Mark's audience would probably not have reacted with the same degree of horrified consternation as those witnessing the original event: the rift with Judaism was already more-or-less complete and many of his readers would have been Gentiles. Indeed, Jesus's patent

breaking of taboo would have been a source of comfort. But there may have been method in Jesus's madness in calling Levi. One of the things that united all Jews beyond the exclusive barriers created by the various factions was the necessity of paying the poll-tax levied specifically on Jews by the Romans in A.D. 6. If you were embarking on a mission to the Chosen People in a racially-mixed cosmopolitan area, who better to choose than someone who knew intimately who it was that continued to claim allegiance to Yahweh despite the real, financial cost? The "children" needed to be contacted first with an invitation to enter the Kingdom before the mission was extended to "house-pets". Levi may have been a key agent in this mission. Perhaps there is some connection with this possibility and the ancient tradition that Levi was in fact Matthew, and the author of the most "Jewish" of the four Gospels.

"LEGION", THE LUNATIC. MARK 5:1-13. The emphasis throughout this story is on ritual pollution. The man lives in a cemetery, a place of uncleanness. According to the Law, if you touched a corpse you were made unclean. Those who were eager to extend and develop the Law said that even if you walked over somebody's grave, it made you unclean. This is why during major festivals tombs were whitewashed so that you could see them from a distance. The madman in question actually lives in tombs - the sort of cave-tomb that Jesus himself was buried in. When the spirits are cast out they go into a herd of pigs - an unclean animal of the kind you would expect to find in Gentile - "unclean" - territory. The whole story is about Jesus going into a situation of extreme uncleanness. As in the case of

the leper, Jesus' original preoccupation may have been the Jewish taboos involving "clean" and "unclean", but Mark's main concern is to show the supernatural power of Jesus against the forces of evil. The story becomes also another way of expressing the point made in "The Stilling of the Storm": that Jesus has the power to overcome the turmoil in which Mark's Christian audience were finding themselves at that time.

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER. MARK 5:22-24, 35-43. Mark has dovetailed two stories to show there is a gap between Jairus coming to him and him actually arriving and finding that the girl had died. No-one would have asked even the greatest of miracle-workers to attend a corpse. There are lots of interesting details in this story which might have only come from an eye-witness: the name of the girl's father; Jesus's actual words in the Aramaic; the girl's age; Jesus' instruction after the healing. In particular, we are told that Jesus took Peter, James and John with him into the room. (Everybody would have normally avoided the room where the deceased person was laid as an "unclean" zone.) So we can speculate that Mark's Gospel may have been based on an eye-witness report of Peter. Those who favour "natural" explanations of the miracles would find inspiration in the fact that in an eastern climate the whole business of burying the dead was accomplished with the utmost speed (see *Acts* 5:5-10). Perhaps the mourners were mistaken in their hasty belief that the girl had died!

THE WOMAN WITH THE HAEMORRHAGE. MARK 5:25-34. The hint of euphemism in "trouble" may not be the only reason why Mark seems to be

struggling a little with this story. For instance, how does Jesus know that he has been touched? Mark introduces the idea that Jesus feels the power draining out of him - almost like a battery running down. Likewise, if a woman has some kind of menstrual problem, how does she know when it stops? Mark says, "She had the feeling inside herself" A person who was sick in certain ways might have been triply afflicted. First of all they might have had the pain of the illness; secondly the illness might have made them ritually unclean; and thirdly that uncleanness would have been regarded as the curse of God and would have led to them being shunned by those claiming or seeking righteousness. The woman with the bleeding almost certainly had a gynaecological condition which rendered her unclean. She could have kept the condition a secret and just gone about her business, but presumably she was a devout woman who was troubled by the fact that she had been afflicted with this problem. But she could not resist the temptation to touch this holy man in the hope that she might be cured of her condition. She knew she was doing something which, in the eyes of conventional religion, was wrong: when you were unclean it was believed that your ritual uncleanness could be transmitted to others. If this man was holy she should not have been touching him. That is why she was afraid when Jesus realised that he had been touched. Then much to her surprise, no doubt, she found that Jesus was forgiving, and did not seem to share these taboos about ritual cleanliness.

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From The Gnostic Apocalypse

Man has the Divine within him. Spiritual Truth is located within the deeper recesses of the mind rather than on the shallow surface of consciousness. It manifests itself as story or tableau the meaning of which is not always easy to articulate in rational terms. Indeed, such Truth may be altered and so distorted by "worldly" considerations such as the material needs of a professional priesthood, the maintenance and upkeep of buildings, and the requirement of hierarchies to be seen to be historically consistent in their utterances. But the spring cannot be dammed: the underground stream of stories, images and symbols - dreams dreamed, remembered and re-incarnated in word, paint or stone - will continue to gush forth.

One such incarnation is the Apocalypse of John of Patmos. Unsurprisingly, visions here of the end-time are reflections of dreams of the beginnings. In both, the number seven is key as the time-sequence of the primal story, and light is the symbol by which all other symbols are seen. And yet, as if to emphasise the fact that Truth is not located in sequential order and rational lucidity, the Apocalypse constantly subverts sequence and reason in its presentation of material: the orderly and light-filled procession of the story of creation has become a nightmarish jumble, a reflection of the creation-story seen in a glass darkly - as darkened by sin and as rendered a counterfeit of God's intended order.

In the beginning Wisdom (Sophia) proceeded from God and created matter, energy and time (Proverbs

3:19-20, 8:22-31). Matter had rudimentary structure and time existed as sequence, but neither was purposeful. It was only when God spoke His Word that the order of the days of creation commenced. The Alpha of that Word was Light. Light was the prime creation. This “Light” was not the light we see: rather, it was the Light by which we see light (Psalm 36:9). The light we see came into being when the light-emitting bodies were formed on the fourth day (Genesis 1:14). Rather, the first Light was (and is) spiritual consciousness, the Gnosis which ordered Sophia’s creation and which is conscious both of itself and of its Creator.

This Light brings about eternal Life (John 1:4; 1 John 1:5). It has been manifested in these latter days in and through Jesus of Nazareth, and, before him in time collectively in the 144,000 Gnostics of spiritual Israel (Revelation 22:13). Once this Light was shed upon matter and time, the various forms of creation could arise in a hierarchy during the six “days” of the issuing-forth of the universe. When that process was completed, the created order could function independently of its Creator, and God could, on the seventh day, “rest”. The Fall initiated the reverse process, one of entropy and occlusion, culminating in the final Omega of the Word of destruction, when the light emitted will be the glare of the lake of fire.

Adam and Eve were able to eat all the trees of the Garden that were available for their food, except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. These trees included the Tree of Life, conferring immortality. But as result of their disobedience, God passed a sentence of death. The pair did not

die immediately: the sentence took the form of an exclusion from the Tree of Life. Adam then went on to live 930 years reckoned in mortal time. If Adam was 70 years old – a mature man – when he ate the fruit, he was in fact alive for 1000 years. All of Adam's children now pass into oblivion until the second coming of Christ. The perfect obedience of Jesus – after Adam, a second son of God - earned him the immortality denied to Adam.

God allowed the Fall to happen. He did not intervene. He was “resting” for a “day”. During this time Satan and the wicked angels were active on earth (Genesis 3:1, 6:1-4; Revelation 12:1). The period of “rest” ended with the death of Adam after 1000 years. God then brought about the destruction of the Flood, which removed from the earth the evil which had been brought about by the wicked angels without destroying the Gnostic remnant of Noah and his family (Revelation 12:15-16). The millennial rule of Christ may be seen as another period of “rest” during which the wicked angels are not this time allowed to take control of the earth: Satan is bound during the restorative reign of the second Adam.

During the lifetime of Adam all the patriarchs up to the time of Noah were born. Noah was 14 years old when Adam died. Once Adam had died and God's period of “rest” was over, the Almighty began His salvage operation. It began with the olive-branch brought back by the dove after the Flood (Genesis 8:11), and will end with the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-18). The earth is and will be renewed over seven periods of time, each characterised as seven months – the final period

being a grand jubilee (Deuteronomy 15:1). During six periods of seven months (mentioned in Revelation as 42 months or 1260 days) , God's judgment on the earth takes the form of the disastrous consequences of the Fall on the natural order.

During the seventh period of seven months there is first a "silence" in heaven (Revelation 8:1): God "rests" completely for "half an hour". This is the time of Armageddon and the Great Tribulation when Satan and the wicked angels once again briefly seek to gain the upper hand. The millennium then begins: a period of a thousand years during which the earth is ruled by a righteous regent as it should have been during the thousand years of Adam's lifetime. God is able to rest easy in the knowledge that His son has things in hand. Finally, the last gasp of the forces of evil and those who choose to follow them into disobedience initiates the final judgment when they are consigned once and for all to the lake of fire.

Thus in the Apocalypse the 42 months of God's judgment on the natural order of creation is spoken of as 1260 days and 3½ years: 6 times 7 months. After the half-hour complete "rest" of God His Sabbath continues with the Jesus human son of God, the second Adam, ruling on behalf of his Father for 1000 years. Thus the 49 months of post-lapsarian creation is completed: the Great White Throne Judgment concludes a period of 7000 years from the death of Adam and the Flood, itself 7000 years after the creation of the Light of Gnosis. Creation is re-run and the world is renewed. A word of caution, however, is needed: the numbers

are symbolic, as is the number 144,000 of the spiritual Israel.

The six periods of sin-induced catastrophe on the earth are however punctuated by six covenants which are part of God's salvage-operation: through Noah, through Abraham, through Moses, through Joshua, through David, and through Jesus. Each covenant is an agreement by means of which a faithful remnant is defined by its commitment to Higher Truth and sets itself apart from the world, so that it may not only be spared the second death in the lake of fire, but be re-admitted to Paradise and access to the Tree of Life (Revelation 20:11-15). In each case in the Biblical account the spiritual movement towards God is symbolised by a geographical movement, and each covenant is sealed by the blood of sacrifice.

The remnant saved by the "old" covenant is symbolised in Revelation by the 144,000; those saved by the "new" covenant in Jesus (who offers himself as a new Passover lamb and by so doing reveals his understanding of God's plan, and is therefore alone worthy to open the seals hiding the scroll of history) is represented by the "great crowd" (Revelation 7:9). Both are symbolised by the 24 elders seen in the tableau beyond the door opened onto heaven for John. The "old" covenants are typified by physical movement from an old geographical place to a new one: to Ararat, Haran, Sinai, Gilgal and Jerusalem. The "new" covenant is symbolised by Jesus' physical passing into heaven itself at the Ascension.

The new Exodus began in fact with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Thus the "great crowd" carrying their palms (Revelation 7:9) are compared implicitly to the throng who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah and hailed him as he embarked on the series of events which will saw him impaled by the false religion of Babylon (Revelation: 7:4-10, 14:1). The New Jerusalem is founded on both the "old" and the "new" covenants (Revelation 21:12-14): Gnostics of all ages are able to recognise that higher Truth and imperative which inevitably leads to martyrdom at the hand of those religious Powers-that-Be which, though unmasked, have a Protean ability to form new images of themselves to worship (Revelation 13:13).

The Spiritual Israel of Gnosis is symbolised in Revelation by the 12 stars crowning creation's progenitrix Sophia (Revelation 12:1) - the faithful remnant of the "old" covenant - and by her child who, withdrawn from the world of carnality, is the ever-growing great crowd of adherents to the "new" covenant. The child's fare is Scripture truly understood. The two witnesses - the Old Testament and New Testaments - were suppressed by a corrupt religion during the Constantinian apostasy (Revelation 11). No human institution can be an infallible depository of Truth; all religions are corrupted by carnal considerations. The Gnostic must find the lampstand of true light and the olive tree of its sustenance wherever it is to be found.

Faith, as in the case of Abraham, is superior to obedience to the Law as long as the promise of immortality is yet unfulfilled. While access to the

Commandments was through the procreative line of Israel, faith involved a renunciation of all rights proceeding from membership of that procreative line – as in Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac and his faith in an implied promise of resurrection. The New Israel of the 144,000 sealed in Revelation are virgins undefiled by women. That is, they have renounced salvation by means of the procreative line. It is these who will reign with Christ on earth for 1000 years – that is, for a time equivalent to the original life-span of Adam, thereby putting right his flawed dominion.

During Jesus’ millennial rule on earth, a “great crowd” of survivors of Armageddon and of the resurrected who were unable during their natural lifespan to access the proclaimed Gospel will be able to choose the “everlasting gospel” of obedience to God in circumstances where Satan is bound and Paradise restored on earth. The 144,000 co-regents will intercede as priests for their resurrected ancestors. The Danites, however, are excluded from the spiritual Israel (Judges 17:1-18:31). Their sin against the Holy Spirit was to use religion as a justification for evil. They will be resurrected at the end of the millennium, judged, then consigned to everlasting torment in the lake of fire – a diabolical immortality.

The scroll of the six days of creation is open for all to see in the Book of Genesis. The basis for God’s salvage-operation is also available for all to see in the Law. The scroll of the six “days” of destruction is open in the Apocalypse of John. During the seventh “day” of a thousand years God will “rest” from the destruction and Satan will be bound so

that the “everlasting gospel” can be seen, unobscured by the forces of evil (Revelation 14:6-7, Romans 1:19-22). In the final consummation, the scroll of creation upon which God’s Word has been written will be rolled up, and all will begin anew. The Light of Gnosis, God’s first creation, will once again illumine nature, and those passing the final test will be given access to the Tree of Life.

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